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SERMONS.

SERMONS.

BY

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ARCHDEACON OF CHICHESTER.

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1842.

TO

THE RIGHT REVEREND FATHER IN GOD,

GEORGE,

LORD BISHOP OF NEW JERSEY,

IN REMEMBRANCE OF

THE DAY SPENT WITH THE CLERGY

ASSEMBLED IN VISITATION AT STORRINGTON,

JULY 13TH, 1841;

WHEN, IN HIS OWN WORDS,

HE BADE GOD SPEED,

"AS A CATHOLIC BISHOP, TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ENGLAND;"

AND CHEERED US WITH THE CONSCIOUSNESS

THAT UNITY AND PERPETUITY STILL ABIDE IN THE INHERITANCE

OF OUR SPIRITUAL MOTHER,

This Volume,

WITH RESPECT AND AFFECTION,

IS INSCRIBED BY

HIS LORDSHIP'S FAITHFUL SERVANT IN CHRIST,

H. E. M.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

THE MYSTERY OF SIN.

PAGE

By one man sin entered into the world.—*Romans* v. 12. . . 1

SERMON II.

CHRISTIANS NEW CREATURES.

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.—2 *Cor.* v. 17. 19

SERMON III.

ON FALLING FROM THE GRACE OF BAPTISM.

Remember Lot's wife.—*St. Luke* xvii. 32. 34

SERMON IV.

THE MYSTERY OF MAN'S BEING.

I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.—*Psalm* cxxxix. 14. . 47

SERMON V.

WORLDLY AFFECTIONS DESTRUCTIVE OF LOVE TO GOD.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. —1 *St. John* ii. 15. 62

SERMON VI.

SALVATION A DIFFICULT WORK.

PAGE

Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.—*St. Matthew* vii. 13, 14. 77

SERMON VII.

A SEVERE LIFE NECESSARY FOR CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS.

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.—*St. Luke* ix. 23. . . 89

SERMON VIII.

CHRIST OUR ONLY REST.

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.—*St. Matthew* xi. 28-30. 105

SERMON IX.

THE DANGER OF MISTAKING KNOWLEDGE FOR OBEDIENCE.

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.—*St. James* i. 22, 23, 24. 117

SERMON X.

OBEDIENCE THE ONLY REALITY.

The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.—1 *John* ii. 17. . . 129

SERMON XI.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST THE ONLY TRUE IDEA OF SELF-DEVOTION.

PAGE

All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.—*Philippians* ii. 21. 146

SERMON XII.

THE REWARDS OF THE NEW CREATION.

Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.—*St. Matthew* xix. 27, 28, 29. 159

SERMON XIII.

GOD'S KINGDOM INVISIBLE.

And when He was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you.—*St. Luke* xvii. 20, 21. 172

SERMON XIV.

THE DAILY SERVICE A LAW IN GOD'S KINGDOM.

And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved.—*Acts* ii. 46, 47. . . . 186

SERMON XV.

THE HIDDEN LIFE.

PAGE
Your life is hid with Christ in God.—*Colossians* iii. 3. . . . 208

SERMON XVI.

SINS OF INFIRMITY.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation : the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.—*St. Matthew* xxvi. 41. 223

SERMON XVII.

SELF-OBLATION THE TRUE IDEA OF OBEDIENCE.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh : how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?—*Hebrews* ix. 13, 14. 241

SERMON XVIII.

THE SPIRITUAL CROSS.

About the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani ? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me ?—*St. Matthew* xxvii. 46. . . 258

SERMON XIX.

THE HIDDEN POWER OF CHRIST'S PASSION.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. —*St. John* xii. 32. 274

SERMON XX.

SUFFERING THE SCHOOL OF OBEDIENCE.

Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered.—*Hebrews* v. 8. 287

SERMON XXI.

THE SLEEP OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED.

PAGE

I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him.—1 *Thessalonians* iv. 13, 14. 308

SERMON XXII.

THE COMMEMORATION OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED.

We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.—1 *Cor.* xv. 51. 320

SERMON XXIII.

THE WAITING OF THE INVISIBLE CHURCH.

And when He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.—*Revelations* vi. 9, 10, 11. 333

SERMON XXIV.

THE WAITING OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH.

This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.—1 *Corinthians* vii. 29, 30, 31. 349

SERMON XXV.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

PAGE

Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.—*St. Luke* xxiv. 39. 364

SERMON XXVI.

THE GLORY OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.—*St. Matthew* xiii. 43. 384

SERMON I.

THE MYSTERY OF SIN.

ROMANS v. 12.

"By one man sin entered into the world."

PERHAPS there is no more awful thought than this: that sin is all around us and within us, and we know not what it is. We are beset by it on every side: it hangs upon us, hovers about us, casts itself across our path, hides itself where our next footstep is to fall, searches us through and through, listens at our heart, floats through all our thoughts, draws our will under its sway, and ourselves under its dominion; and we do not know what it is. It is a pestilence that walketh in darkness; nothing stays its advance; it passes through all barriers, pierces all strongholds; the very air seems to waft it into our dwellings. Now it is very awful to know this, and yet not to know what is this malign and deadly power. We read, that in the beginning sin was not in the world; that "by one man sin entered;" that here it has ever since abode; that

it brought death with it; that "death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

We will consider, then, what sin is. Thus much, indeed, we do know, that it is a will opposed to the will of God. To make this more clear, let us consider, first, that whatsoever or whencesoever be the origin of sin, its home or dwelling is the moral nature of God's creatures. So far as we can understand, none but moral beings are capable of sin, because none but moral beings are responsible; that is, know good from evil, are on trial, are able to make choice, and are responsible for choosing. In saying this, we are only saying that the chief feature, or power, or endowment of a moral being, is a sense to discern, and a will to choose; and that, as to choose the good is holiness, so to choose the evil is sin. And consider next, that a will which chooses the evil is a will opposed to the will of God. Sin, therefore, is a quality, or inclination, or posture of the will of God's creatures, at variance with His own; or, to speak less exactly, but more simply, it is a will opposed to His.

St. Paul says, "By one man"—that is, by the wilful act of one man—"sin entered into the world." And from this we may draw the following truths:—

1. First, that the entering in of sin proves the

presence of an Evil Being. We talk of powers, and qualities, and principles, and oppositions, and the like; but we are only putting words for realities. They do not exist apart from beings create or uncreate; they are the attributes and energies of living spirits. Sin entered in through and by the Evil One; that is, the Devil. There is working in the world something which is not of God. All that He made was good; all was holy, and full of life, and immortal. The world was a manifestation of God, of His wisdom and His goodness; man was an image of His being and of His will. All was one; all moved in harmony, having one supreme and universal law. Things are now divided by a twofold movement, and are full of diversity and opposition, discord and warfare. An Evil One has entered, and spread his enmity throughout the world. For wise ends, God suffers this rebellion to smoulder in His kingdom. Though He might have girdled about the world with the precinct of His own holiness, so that sin should have never entered; though at a breath of His, even now, all should once more stretch out its hands without sin unto God; yet, for some unsearchable purposes of wisdom, He has, by the entering of the Evil One, permitted the unity of His works to be troubled, and the harmony of His creatures to be marred. It is most necessary for us ever to bear in mind the personality of

Satan; for we are often wont to speak of sin, as we do of sicknesses or plagues, as if it were an impersonal thing; and we thereby lose all distinct perception of its power, deceitfulness, and malignity. We see, then, that there is, in the world, as it were, a new law, opposed to the law of God; and administered by an Evil Being, who has entered and gained a hold in God's creation, and is therefore called "the prince of this world,"[1] "the prince of the power of the air," "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience."[2]

2. Another truth to be learned is this, that, by the entering in of sin, a change passed upon the world itself. I am not now speaking of physical evil, such as dissolution and death, and the wasting away of God's works, and the like; but only of moral evil. A change passed upon the condition of man. His will revolted, and transferred its loyalty from God to the Evil One. By casting off his obedience to God, he lost his government over himself. So long as he was subject to the Divine will, he wielded an absolute power over his own nature. The passions and lusts of the flesh were then pure affections held in a bond of unity and subordination. When he rebelled against God, they rebelled against him; and the bond of their unity being broken, they warred against each other, and

[1] St. John xiv. 30. [2] Eph. ii. 2.

his will was dragged away into bondage by each in turn. And by this it came to pass, first, that he lost his innocence; the presence of God, wherewith he was encompassed, departed from him, leaving him naked; fear cast out love; from thankful he became thankless; the lusts of the flesh soiled his spiritual being; his will caught the manifold taint of a world of evil; and through these dark avenues the wicked one gained a free entrance into his soul. He lay open to incursion on all sides. There were as many breaches as there were impure affections. And thus man's will became one with the will of the Evil One. It was so drawn to it as to move with it; and so became, as it were, a part of the evil which entered into the world. Thenceforward man was the representative of the alien and antagonist power which had broken the unity of God's kingdom; and his will was bent in a direct opposition to the will of God. Such, then, as I said before, is sin.

There are one or two further remarks to be made on this subject.

And first, that this awful principle of sin has been ever multiplying itself from the beginning of the world. It so clave to the life of man, that as living souls were multiplied, sin in them was multiplied also. Adam "begat a son in his own likeness." And every several will born into this

world, is born at variance with God. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh."[1] "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."[2] Every several man contains in him the whole mystery of the fall, the whole principle of evil. It may be said, that at the birth of every man sin enters into the world. All along the line of these six thousand years, every one of the countless generations of mankind bears the full dilated image of the first fallen man. So was the earth peopled, from the first-born of Adam to the great family of all nations and languages and people and tongues, ever multiplying, ever replenishing itself. As sin, through the power of death, withers off generation after generation, so does it by its fearful hold in the being of man, perpetually reproduce itself. And here it still abides in God's world, carrying on unceasing, universal warfare against Heaven. In the beginning there was one man at variance with his Maker. Now there is an untold array of disobedient wills. Even the blessing of fruitfulness, which God breathed upon the earth, has become the channel through which the mystery of evil perpetuates, distributes, and multiplies itself. Such is the fall of the world, and such by nature are we ourselves. Well may we stand in awe of our

[1] St. John, iii. 6. [2] Rom. viii. 7.

mysterious being, and pray to be delivered "from the body of this death."

Another remark is this, that as sin has multiplied in its extent, so it would seem also to have become more intense in its character. It is plain, that in every man born into this world there is the whole of Adam's fallen nature. The fault and corruption is in us; so that we are every one "very far gone from original righteousness," and are of our own nature inclined to evil. We are born outcasts from God's presence, sullied, alienated, and opposed. Such we are, I say, by nature: but we become (except through God's grace we repent) far worse in act. When the living powers which are in us become unfolded into energy, the evil that cleaves to them unfolds with them. What we were before only in bias or inclination, we afterwards become in consciousness and will; what we were only in a leaning, we become afterwards in a habit; and a habit of sin is original sin full grown, and multiplied both in the manifold kind and energy of evil. It is plain to all, that (except, as I said, in penitents) the whole life of a man from birth to death is a deterioration. He is ever becoming worse. Time, opportunity, temptation, are necessary to quicken and unfold all that lies wrapped up in his birth-sin: and all these are ministered to him day by

day. The faults of childhood grow into the sins of boyhood, and these grow vivid and intense, and burst out into the manifold guilt of after-life; and as the heart throws up new lusts continually, so does the perverted reason complicate itself into crookedness and cunning. Who does not see that, except a man day by day grows better, he must needs grow worse? Even they whose sins do not grow more open and profligate, are nevertheless deteriorating. They grow impure in thought and will, if not in act; or hard, worldly, selfish, and unthankful; or irreverent and consciously alienated from God; or they live on in the world without love to God, and every year chills and deadens them more and more. Now what is all this but original sin multiplying in kind and energy, and growing more exceeding sinful? Better were it for us that we had never been born; or, if born, that we had passed with no more than the taint of our birth-sin to the tribunal of Christ, than that we should live on only to become twofold more the children of hell than before.

And now, if this be true of individual men, must it not also be true of all mankind? Must not the world, in its long life of six thousand years, have grown worse than it was in the beginning? Has not the birth-sin of the world, so to speak, unfolded itself into the variety and energy

of a fuller and maturer wickedness? I think it is plain, from reason and from holy Scripture, that such a process of deterioration has been going on: that the mystery of evil, no less than the mystery of godliness, has been strengthening and unfolding itself. Now we must not be led astray by illustrations. The life of the world is not like, but analogous to, the life of an individual man. Three generations of man are not like the yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow of a single being. We carry on with us from day to day the whole moral context of the day gone by. We are to-day all we were yesterday, and something more. We have no breaks in our personal identity—no new beginnings of our moral life. We do not revert continually to our first original. But all this is true of the world, and of mankind as a living race. The mystery of original sin is begun over and over again with each successive generation. Men grow up to a certain height of the moral stature, and are cut down and laid in the earth: their children rise up more or less to the same standard, within certain limits which are the conditions of our being and of our probation. The days of one age are threescore years and ten; though some men be so strong that they come to fourscore years. And in this short race every man has his own beginning and ending of moral life.

All this indeed is very true; but it is no less certain, that there is a growth and accumulation of evil which in the life of the world is analogous to the deterioration of character in an individual man. What we read in the book of Genesis is proof enough. We no sooner read that "men began to multiply upon the face of the earth," than we also read, "and God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; and it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart."[1] Now the whole history of the Bible shews us a continual unfolding of the sin of man. To the first act of a disobedient will, were added the shedding of a brother's blood, the great unexplained fall of "the sons of God," and the sins which called down a decree rescinding the law of creation, and brought the flood upon the earth. Then through Ham, who was as the original sin of the new world, came again transgression; and Noah sinned, and idolatry filled the earth, and God gave men up to a reprobate mind. Then again in Abraham began a new age; and once more the line of sin reappeared through Abraham, Jacob, Aaron, Moses, David, even the chief of God's saints; after a while the people fell into idolatry,

[1] Gen. vi. 5, 6.

and then into unbelief, and crucified the Lord of Glory. And then, again, began the new creation; and among the Apostles there was Judas, the forerunner of sin in the world of the regenerate. And it was expressly foretold by the Spirit, that in the latter days there should be perilous times, and a falling away from God. And what holy Scripture thus declares to us we see actually fulfilled. The history of the Catholic Church shews that there has been a deterioration analogous to the earlier declensions of mankind. I am not now speaking of the work of regeneration, which also has been going on in the midst of this unfolding of evil. The saints have been each one growing holier; and the Church has been edified continually, and is rising towards its perfection. I am speaking not of the Church, but of the world, and only notice it lest it should seem to be an objection which has been overlooked. From all this it is plain that there have been four great ages of the world; that is, from Adam to Noah, from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to the coming of our Lord, and from the coming of our Lord to this day. Scripture tells us that in the first three there was a declension from God. It foretells it of the fourth, in which we live; and the history of Christendom already shews the partial fulfilment of the prophecy. From these great facts, let us look to

the laws on which they rest. These broad declensions of mankind are the direct and necessary consequence of the progressive deterioration of the individual character; the manifold inventiveness of sin; the universal contagion of moral evil; the infinite multiplication and refinement in the forms of disobedience, arising from the interchange of personal or national corruptions; the accumulating power of tradition, which gathers up and embodies the characteristic sins of every successive generation, and creates a new moral world—a world of wrong and darkness and deceit—into which the next generation enters at its birth. Sin is born in us; and we are born into a world of its own creating. There is hanging between the soul of man and the realities of God, a veil wrought up of lying visions: upon it are traced the dazzling forms which allure the sin that is in him to put itself forth in wilful acts of evil. Who can doubt that they who were born in the later times of a declining age,—as, for instance, a generation before the flood,—were born into a darker, more inveterate, and therefore a more wicked world, than they who followed soon after the first sin of man? St. Paul, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, teaches us how the sins of the heathen world little by little reached their height; how they began in a shrinking of the heart from God, and then through pride fell into ignor-

ance, and through ignorance into the most horrible rebellions against the laws of nature—of laws, that is, which are written even in the passive and lower nature of man—instincts obeyed by the beasts that perish. Idolatry, again, was a sin of slow and subtle growth. A long course of sin was needed, so to deaden and blind the heart of man as to make idolatry possible. Age after age gave in its contribution: there was a sort of tide, an unseen current, swelled by many feeding streams, which bore along every generation, as one followed another, in the same line; so that, besides the original sin of each man, there was a sinful tradition of mankind, which excited, and unfolded, and ripened, and carried it to a maturity and strength which it would not otherwise attain; and every generation contributed somewhat to this onward tide, and bequeathed to the next a further measure of declension from God.

It may be objected, that, nevertheless, there has been an advance both in the moral and intellectual state of mankind, and that this view, therefore, cannot be true. To which it may be said, first, that such an advance would not prove, that the tendency of sin is not to multiply itself and to grow more intensely sinful; but that God, in His mercy, is working even more mightily, counteracting all, both the original and accumulated powers of evil.

And that is most certainly true. "Where sin abounded, there did grace much more abound." But this is not our subject: we are speaking of the unfolding of the power of sin in the world, which is no less certain than the gracious unfolding of the mystery of godliness, which shall overcome and cast it out at the last. And so, again, it must be said of the alleged advance of the moral and intellectual state of man. It is certain that in Christendom there is neither the blind idolatry nor the gross corruptions of the heathen. Be it so; but there are sins both of the flesh and spirit such as the heathen never knew. The form may be changed; the outward grossness may be purged off. There may be sins having less that is akin to the unreasonable creatures of God, but a nigher fellowship with Satan. The personal guilt may be no less; the opposition of the will to the will of God may be greater. And this is the true life and malignity of sin. Adam's sin had in it little of grossness, but it was intensely guilty—the more so because he was fresh from the hand of his Maker: he was nigh to God, and God held converse with him. Even so it is with Christendom: the sins of Christians, though they are refined and reduced to never so small a measure, are greater and guiltier far than the sins of Tyre and Sidon. It is Capernaum that shall be thrust down to hell. Christendom, as

Adam was, is new from the hand of God. He is in the midst of it; He has filled it with the light of His presence; His mercy, His truth, His Spirit, are revealed in it. We are nigh God, and He has brought us to an awful fellowship with Himself. As the mystery of godliness has unfolded in the midst of us, and the light of it has been forced into the conscience of Christendom, so do even the lesser sins of men become far guiltier. They are committed against more light, more grace, greater mercies, louder warnings—in despite of the inward pleadings and drawings of the Spirit of life. It may be, that in Christians a common lie is guiltier than the sin of Achan, and the visions of the imagination than the sin of David; and if so, then it may be a more conscious, naked, wilful act of disobedience in Christians to oppose the law of God in the least, than in the blind unconverted heathen to transgress it in the greatest. And therefore it may be that a multitude of sins, in deed and in thought, which are deemed to be consistent with the context of a refined life, are far more intense provocations of the Divine Majesty, and express far more resolute opposition to the Divine will, than the impure idolatries of the Gentiles, or even the backslidings of the Jews. And, once more, what shall we say of heresy; that is, obstinate resistance to the light of truth? And, above all, of infidelity? What must

be the intensity of spiritual evil in such a sin! How pure from all grossness; how keen and disembodied, so to speak, and yet how nearly akin to Satan! And these are sins, I may say, peculiar to Christendom—characteristic, above all, of what is called an enlightened or intellectual age. What were the heresies of the Docetæ, or the Cerinthians, or the Montanists, compared with the scoffing, ribald infidelity which reared itself up in the bosom of the Church a hundred and fifty years ago? Even where infidelity did not issue (which was seldom enough) in the lowest sensuality, yet what a temper of cold, proud resistance—what an energetic variance of will to the mind of God was there in the heart of an infidel! What a prodigy in God's world is a professing atheist! These are fruits not of the green tree, but of the dry. They were not put forth in the beginning of the new creation; but in the latter days, when, according to prophecy, there have come "scoffers walking after their own lusts:" when we see on every side the words of St. Paul coming to pass: "This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come; for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady,

high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."[1] One more fact will be enough. If any man would see the multiplying power and intensity of spiritual evil, let him compare the unity of the Church in the beginning with the schisms of Christendom now. The same sin which entered and destroyed the unity of the old creation, has re-entered and broken up again the restored unity of the new. But, to leave both the past and the present, let us remember that the time is not yet come. The full unfolding of sin has ever been at the close of the dispensations of God; it has been at its worst when He was nighest. So, we are taught, it shall be again. All God's Word foretells it; all the face of the world bespeaks the working out of the prophecy. The day of Christ shall not come, until "there come a falling away first, and that wicked be revealed." The mystery of evil, which by one man entered into the world, is now teeming with its mightiest birth. Men have sinned long, and sinned greatly against Heaven; but there is a warfare coming, a strife of man's will against the will of God, in the tumult of which shall all former disobedience be forgotten. The Evil One shall be loosed upon the earth, having great wrath, "because he knoweth he hath but a short time." And all things are making ready for him: the

[1] 2 Tim. iii. 1-4.

powers of spiritual wickedness marshalling themselves in secret, unfolding their legions, and unrolling their banners around the camp of the saints. Hell is moving itself to meet his coming. And then shall the sin which by one man entered into the creation of God be at its full, and the world-long growth and gathering of this awful mystery be accomplished. It shall at last stand forth in the earth, at the full stature of its hate and daring against heaven; and by the coming of the Son of Man in glory shall be cast out for ever.

SERMON II.

CHRISTIANS NEW CREATURES.

2 Cor. v. 17.

"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

Such is the change which passes upon Christians through the power of Christ their Lord: they are made new creatures. And this deep mystery of our own renewed being flows out of the mystery of Christ's incarnation. He took our manhood and made it new in Himself, that we might be made new in Him. He hallowed our manhood, and carried it up into the presence of His Father as the first sheaf of the coming harvest, and the first-fruits of a new creation. And we shall be made new creatures through the same power by which He was made man—by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost. He was born in the flesh, we in the Spirit: His birth is the symbol of our regeneration, and we shall therefore be conformed to His likeness. "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we

know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is."[1] In the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit upon the throne of His kingdom, that is, at the resurrection of the dead and the restitution of all things, we shall be born again of the earth, as Adam in the beginning. In the day-spring of the resurrection the dew of our birth shall be of the womb of the morning.

So much we know generally, and of the future. But St. Paul says, "If any man be in Christ he *is* a new creature." There is, therefore, a particular and a present sense in which this is true; and this it concerns us most of all to know. We will see, then, how it is that we may be said to be new creatures now; and afterwards we may learn some great lessons from it.

1. And, first, we are made new creatures by a present change working in our moral nature; that is to say, through our regeneration in holy baptism. By the love of God electing us to a new birth of the Spirit, and by the Holy Ghost working through that visible sacrament, we are translated from wrath to grace, from the power of darkness to the kingdom of His dear Son. Old things pass away, and all things become new around the regenerate man. We look upward to a new heaven; we stand upon a new earth. Both are reconciled: the heaven,

[1] 1 John iii. 1.

through the blood-shedding of Christ, opened to all believers; the earth, healed of the original curse, and pledged to restore its dead. We are brought under the shadow of the Cross, within whose dominion the powers of sin are bound. We receive that thing which by nature we cannot have—a baptism not of water only, but of the Holy Ghost. It does not more become us to search into God's secret manner of working in holy baptism, than in the holy eucharist; both are sacraments, both mysteries, both symbols to the eye, both gifts of grace to the soul of man. In baptism we are made new creatures, so that we may grow daily to the sanctity of angels, or so that we may fall, and hold our regeneration in unrighteousness,—as angels that kept not their first estate hold their angelic nature still in anguish and in warfare against God.

2. But further; Christians are new creatures by present, ever-growing holiness of life—by the renewing of their very inmost soul. They are absolutely new creatures—new in the truth of moral reality: new altogether, but still the same. I will pass by the grosser kinds of sin, for instance, profligacy of life, mockery of religion, or unbelief, and take for example two men of opposite characters;—a pure man, whose heart and imagination is hallowed by the Spirit of Christ; and an impure man, whose

thoughts and associations are sullied and defiled. Or take a watchful, self-denying man, who brings under his body, and keeps it in subjection, so as to be ever keen and vigilant, instant in prayer, thoughtful, fond of solitude and of lonely converse with God in secret; and compare him with the heavy, surfeited man—not the gross wine-bibber or glutton alone, but the man that gives himself a full range and measure in all things lawful, and of common life, so as to over-burden his soul with the cloying of the sated body, and deaden the keen tact of conscience, and smother the struggling pulses of his spiritual being. This is a very common character among those that are not religious. What can be more contrary, more altogether several and distinct, than two such men? Or, to take another instance. We see some men large-hearted and generous, denying themselves, almost above measure, that they may give to the poor and to the work of Christ. They kindle with every man's joy, rejoice in his good, make festival with him for the abounding of his happiness; they have tears for the broken in heart, and seem to pass into the place of departed friends as if they were the same loved spirit in another guise—they live, as we say, in other men. And let us compare with such the man who is greedy of gain; who has an evil eye when his neighbour prospers, is busy and blithe when another is stripped

and smitten. Such men are often seen. They are men shrewd in the world's cunning; men of skill in doubling all the changes of life, and in meeting its emergencies. They have a sail for every wind; they are far-sighted and practical; careful of money, but not hard; not absolutely refusing to give, but giving scantily, as buying themselves off cheaply, yet always strictly within the constituted laws of right and honour. Or, to take a last and all-comprehending contrast,—look at the penitent sinner, calm and self-collected, of a gentle bearing and a gentler spirit; shrinking from the approaches of sin by an unerring and almost unconscious instinct; weeping for the sins of other men; mourning in spirit at the recollection of past falls; hating the passing thoughts of evil which overcloud his soul; not only confessing before His Father in secret the sins of every day, but condemning himself as guilty for the very susceptibility of temptation. And then look at a man of no great grossness of life — a sinner of the common sort—hardy, self-trusting, venturous in the midst of evil, unconscious of its dominion. Evil words and thoughts do not grieve him; they are unreal. After he has sinned greatly, he is a little grieved; for a passing moment he is angry and irritable: but he shrinks the more from God—turns to business—tries to fill his thoughts and wait for to-morrow, remembering how often a

little time has deadened his first remorse, and put back his old heart into him again. Now, in all these contrasted characters there is one common basis; there is one common nature—moral, responsible,—a heart, a conscience, a will. They are individuals of the same race and family, so alike in kind as to be one; but so different in character, so diametrically opposed by the antagonist forces of moral energy, that no two other things can be more two than they are. They have no fellowship, no common language. They are each to the other unintelligible riddles.

And now let us take not two men of two characters, but the same man at two stages of his moral life.

If we could compare what the lurking power of our birth-sin would have made a man, who from holy baptism has been shielded and sanctified, with the actual energetic holiness to which the grace of God has wrought his inmost being, we should understand the deep mystery lying in the words, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." But as we can measure powers only in their effects, we must take the common case of a man in whom an after-repentance and change of heart abolishes his former self. Compare together the earlier and the latter state of the man who was once impure, and is now chaste; who was luxurious, and is now mortified in the flesh; who was grasping and

worldly, and now vests the right and disposal of all he has in Christ his Lord; who was once dead and impenitent, and is now broken in heart; though, by the line of identity which runs deeply through all his life, in boyhood, youth, and manhood, binding all his years, with all their burden of good and ill, in one single consciousness; and by the stern rule of moral responsibility, which rivets with an iron bond his former self about him to the last,—though by these laws of our being he is one and the same man still, yet in all other things he is so two as light and darkness cannot be more distinct.

And that because two wills bent contrary ways are, in moral truth, not more two than one which has had two contrary determinations. It is not in the multitude of wills that men are so truly several and divided as in their contrary and conflicting bias. All the lights of heaven, and all the water-springs of the earth, all the angels of God, all spirits and souls of the righteous, are but one in the sameness of their common nature. They are all a perfect unity. It is moral contradiction—moral conflict—the clash of moral antagonists, that makes God and man to be two, and the race of man as divided as it is numerous; and so is it in every living soul changed by the grace of God. He was an evil creature, he is a holy one; that is, he was an old, he is new. Such were Manasseh and Magdalene;

such the apostle Paul; such was even St. John, once ambitious and fiery, but afterwards meek and patient, taking the scourge with joy for his Master's sake. For he, too, had grown into a new creature. He had learned things unutterable, lying on his Master's bosom; he had there gazed with steadfast glance into the clear depths of the Redeemer's love, and by gazing grew into the likeness of his Lord. Such is the law of our regeneration; and so must we be ever changing from old to new. It is a change as searching and as absolute as can be in the limits of the same being. When the flesh is subdued to the spirit, and Satan bruised under our feet, this old world passes away as a shadow, and the new stands out as the visible reality from which the shadow fell: and the whole man grows into a saint. The lowliest and most unlettered man, to whom written books are mysteries — the tiller of the ground — the toiling craftsman — the weary trader — the poor mother fostering her children for God — the little ones whose angels do always behold the face of their Father in heaven, — all these, by the Spirit of Christ working in them, are changed into a saintly newness, and serve with angels, and look into the mystery of God with cherubim, and adore with the seraphim of glory.

Now, if this is to be a new creature, we may well stand in awe of our great and holy calling to be

members of Christ. What an awful change has passed upon each one of us when we knew it not! How fearful is the relation into which we have been brought to the spiritual world! how nigh to the unseen presence of the Word made flesh, and to the person of the Holy Ghost! How appalling, then, is this view of our state as Christians! We are wont to look without reflection on the lives of men baptised like ourselves, and to think that such high mysteries cannot be literally understood; that they must needs be lowered by explanations, so as to accord with the mingled state of the visible church; because we plainly see that the state of baptised men is, for the most part, very far from the spiritual condition expressed in these mysterious words.

For instance, what are we to say of sinful Christians? how are they new creatures? how are they in Christ? and if not in Christ, what is their state? and what must be their end? Surely, a man may say, they cannot be new creatures. In them old things are not passed away; their old sins are loved as much as ever, their old lusts as much pampered, their old habits as much indulged. All their old ways are still about them,—neglect of prayer and of the holy Communion, quick tempers, biting words, evil thoughts, trifling with sin, impenitent recollections of past wickedness—all these hang about them, and they are unchanged; and yet, for all

that, they are in Christ—well were it if they were not so—and this is their condemnation. They are members of His body; they have received that thing which by nature they could not have; they have resisted God and held His grace in unrighteousness. Simon Magus was not sanctified, but he was baptised, and his baptism was his condemnation. The profaners of the holy Sacrament of the Lord's body and blood at Corinth ate and drank their own condemnation; holy things turned in their hands to poison. Well were it had it been common water, bread, and wine,—but they were consecrated. We know not what sinning in holy things may do; nor what tampering in evil may challenge at God's hand. Saul sought to witchcraft, and the Lord raised up Samuel to foretell his death. Balaam tempted the Lord, and an angel withstood him in the way, and would have slain him while he knew it not. The sins of men baptised into Christ are worse than the sins of heathen. The handling of holy things without holiness is an awful mystery of condemnation. Yet all such men are branches in the vine, though dying or dead—twice dead, waiting for the sharp sickle and the burning—yet branches still; and in hell, it may be, the water of baptism shall scorch more fiercely than the fire that is not quenched, and the Cross which was drawn upon their fore-

heads eat into the soul as if it were graven with a finger of flame.

Again; we may ask the same question, not about greater sinners only, but about all Christians. There is no man that liveth and sinneth not; and how shall it be said of any living soul beset by sin, that he is a new creature? Where is the man that does not feel a conscious oneness with his former guilty self? Who does not feel within the smiting of conscience, the vivid recollection of past sins, with all their colour and aggravation; how he tempted the temptation, how he courted the sin, how forgot his resolutions; or how he remembered his prayers, but sinned against them; how he knew his own peril, but betrayed himself? Who does not feel himself at times haunted by the self of other days, which seems to rise up as a spirit of darkness, and cast a spell upon him, and fix him with its eye? It fascinates him, so as well nigh to draw his gaze from Christ. In such a time it is hard for a man to believe that he is indeed a new creature. And still the more when the power of old habits, and the strength of old temptations, seem for a time to prevail: when, even in the holiest seasons,—in prayer and in the holy Eucharist—thoughts once pampered and familiar thrust themselves unbidden now into the abode where they were wont to be welcomed before. Sometimes

we are all but driven to believe; Surely I am unchanged; old things lie heavily upon me, and crush the very life of my soul. "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"

Let us therefore learn some lessons of encouragement. Unlikely as it may seem, our most confident and cheering hopes will be found to arise out of the awful reality of our regeneration. It is because we have been born again, that we have reason to be of good courage. You have the tokens of this change, faint though they be, upon you now. It is true of you, that in pledge and power old things are passed away. It is a new thing to hate what you once loved, to weep over what you once rejoiced in, to feel what was once unheeded. What is this but the yearning of the new creature to burst the bondage of corruption. In you, then, old things are passed, as the night is passed when the darkness is driven before the coming day; and new things are come, as the day is come when the white morning steals up the sky. There may be thronging clouds and weeping showers before mid-day, but to every penitent man the noon shall come at last. The gift of a new birth is in you; the earnest is given; and in every one that endureth, He that hath begun the good work will perfect it until the day of Christ. By one baptism for the remission of sins your transgressions are

blotted out. They have passed from the book of God; and all of the former self that cleaves and clings about you, God shall disentangle and destroy. The past self of a penitent man is, after a wonderful manner, purged, and his losses, in some part at least, restored. "I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the canker-worm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm."[1] Though, doubtless, not without some tokens of an inscrutable forfeiture still abiding, they that truly repent and return to the grace of their regeneration are made to partake once more of the freshness and fragrancy of heart which is the inheritance of the sons of God. Be of good cheer, then; the trials and the buffetings of evil are no more than the churlish days and raving storms which come between the seed-time and the harvest. The clinging taint of sins gone by shall ere long be cleansed; only make sure of your repentance before God,—a repentance that shrinks from a thought of evil as from the second death; and He will finish His own work.

And, lastly; live above this world, as partakers of the new creation. He that is "the beginning of the creation of God" is knitting together in one His mystical body, making up the number of His elect; and to this end is He working in each one of us, cleansing and renewing us after His own image.

[1] Joel ii. 25.

All things about us teem with a new perfection. For a while it must needs be that our eyes are holden: were they but opened, we should understand that even now are we in the heavenly city. Its walls stand round about us; and they that were seen in Dothan walk in its streets of gold. We know not how nigh are the great realities of the world unseen; how truly they are here, though we see them not; how closely and awfully we are related to them by our regeneration. Therefore be it our care to live under an habitual consciousness that we are new creatures, striving day by day to disentangle ourselves from the clinging hold by which this old and fallen world draws us to itself, and having our "life hid with Christ in God." And, as a way to this severer life of faith, live according to the rule of His Church on earth. She bids you to confession, and prayer, and praise, to thanksgiving, and homage. She bids you to fasts and festivals, to sorrow and rejoicing. What are all her chants, and oblations, and solemn assemblies, but the voices, and songs, and gatherings, and marriage-feastings of the new creation? They are earthly shadows of an heavenly gladness. Brethren, look through them; and, as through a veil and a parable, you shall see Christ your Lord changing old things into new. They do but slightly veil His unseen presence from the

eye of flesh. To the eye of faith they are as transparent as the light of noon. The whole Church is a sacrament of His presence; and in all parts of it, the man that seeks Him in purity of heart shall see Him with open face.

SERMON III.

ON FALLING FROM THE GRACE OF BAPTISM.

St. Luke, xvii. 32.

"Remember Lot's wife."

This warning, taken from the familiar history of the Jews, is a part of our Lord's answer to those that asked when the kingdom of God should come. He warned them that it should come with no outward and visible tokens — with few forerunning signs; and even those such as the faithful alone should read. "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, also, as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of

man is revealed. In that day, he which shall be upon the house-top, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away; and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife."[1] Now, in thus calling up to their recollection the judgments of God in old time, our Lord teaches us to recognise the mysterious movements of His providential order, and to learn the broad analogies by which they are controlled. The flood of waters, and the overthrow of Sodom, were forerunning types of judgments yet to come. In the spirit of prophetic warning He thus foreshewed the overthrow of Jerusalem, and the hair-breadth escape which was then awaiting them. But all these, this also included, were no more than types foreshortened, as it were, one behind the other, of His last coming in the end of the world. Such as they were in suddenness and severity, such, beyond all, shall the last coming be. Such as the escape of Lot, and of the remnant who were faithful in Jerusalem, even such also shall be the saving of the righteous; for the righteous shall "scarcely be saved." Such as the judgment on Lot's wife, such likewise shall be the doom of apostate Christians.

And this is the only point we will now dwell upon. We have in this a warning of a peculiar character; we see in it a type of the just wrath of

[1] St. Luke xvii. 26-32.

God against those who, having been once mercifully delivered, shall afterwards fall back. She was, by a distinguishing election of God, and by the hands of angels, saved from the overthrow of the wicked. We, by the same deep counsel of God, have been translated from death to life. She perished in the very way of safety. Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. Lot's wife is the type of those who fall from baptismal grace.

As, for instance, of those who, having been made partakers of salvation by baptism into the Church of Christ, fall away from it through the overmastering power of sin. That a man may fall finally, and without hope, from grace given, is broadly written in holy Scripture. Men would fain have it otherwise; and some beguile themselves by the dream, that they magnify the mercies of God in contending that the gifts of grace are indefectible. Let them beware how they offer strange fire upon God's altar. God will be served only of that which His Spirit hath consecrated to Himself. "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed,

and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die."[1] Again: "If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins; but a certain fearful looking for of fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"[2] And once more: "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify unto themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned."[3] Such is the

[1] Ezek. xviii. 24.

[2] Heb. x. 26.

[3] Heb. vi. 4.

gift of a new birth, held in unrighteousness; and such the end to which every baptised man, who lives in wilful and conscious sin, is perpetually tending. The sins of the flesh and of the spirit wound his inmost soul with a keen and poisoned edge; and the wounds rankle inwardly where no eye but God's can reach. There are very many who in the visible relations of life are without reproach, and yet carry within a heart-sin, indulged in secret, which eats into their whole spiritual life with a most deadly corruption. They have been redeemed from death, and predestined to immortality, though they are dying in the very path to life. Such are the sensual, the unchaste, the intemperate, the proud, the revengeful, and the like.

But we must not narrow this warning to the grosser kinds of sin. The disobedience of Lot's wife was not, that she went back to Sodom, but that she looked back. Doubtless she verily thought that she was pressing on to safety; but her heart was not right in her. She was disobedient in will, and in the hankerings and longings of the mind. The unchanged bent of the heart found expression in a slight but significant act. She looked back: and that forbidden gaze betrayed a multitude of unchastened thoughts, and a world of disobedience.

We must, therefore, apply this same warning not only to those who, through the power of

indulged sin, fall grossly from baptismal grace, but also to all who, in any way, and for any hindering cause, fall back from the holiness of life, of which baptism is both the source and standard. By your baptism you are pledged to a life of sanctity. The life of Christ is your example. Your calling is to be ever growing in likeness to the Son of God. Who, then, is there that needs not to remember Lot's wife? Who of us is so inflexibly bent towards God, as not to be often wavering? whose face so stedfastly set to Zoar, as never to look aside — as never to look back? Where is the man who has so repented of past evil, that he does not sometimes cast back, in unwary thoughts, a hankering look behind? Who has so gained the mastery of himself, as not to be again overmastered? Who has so renounced the world, as not to wax weak at its allurements? Who has so braced himself to the secret discipline of a self-denying life, as not at times to shrink from the hardness he has chosen for his portion? Well is it, and better than we dare hope, if there be none here among us, who, after renouncing a vain, trifling, self-pleasing life, have again yielded themselves, little by little, to be led by the gaudy follies of the world; none whom the opposition of men without God, or the jeering banter of supercilious minds, or the imposing comments of self-important

people, have not slackened, if not checked, in their flight from eternal death. Too surely there are such among us. The world has a clinging hold; and gain, and ease, and levity, and the pomps of life, are cunning baits; and gibes, and laughter, and the grave mockery of familiar friends, are keen weapons of offence; and it is no easy task to bear up against the stream which is ever setting away from God, and to keep the eye of the soul ever waking, and to live in conscious fellowship with the world unseen. It is our natural bias to decline from God. There is somewhat within us which is ever slackening its intention, ever rekindling its old imaginations, ever feeling around for its old supports, ever looking back on its former self. What we once were cleaves so closely to us, that we shall never be wholly free till the morning of the resurrection. The holiness to which our baptism has pledged us is so pure and high, that we faint at the greatness of our way. Of the whole body of baptised men on earth, none are perfect—few nigh unto perfection—many, it must be feared, are energetically evil. And between these two extremes is every measure of approach or departure from God; and on this twofold movement men are perpetually passing and repassing, in the manifold changes of their moral state, and in the partial relapses and recoveries of their spiritual life.

Now, from all this we must learn, first, that any measure of declension from our baptismal grace is a measure of that same decline of which the end is, a hopeless fall from God. I say, it is a measure of the same movement; as a day is a measure of a thousand years. It is a state and inclination of heart which differs from absolute apostacy not in kind, but only in degree. Surely, the first symptoms, all slight though they be, of a pestilence, which is beyond the skill of healing, must needs be greatly feared. Such are small sins, slight tamperings with the edge of conscience, half-unwilling returns to forsaken evil, passive re-admission of once-banished faults; all these are the first beginnings of an impulse and a direction which leads to a settled determination of the heart from God. Every day the deposed powers of evil steal back, and re-assert their dominion: first, a failing, then faults, then a sin, then a mingled throng of lesser acts of disobedience — willed, not done, because, though longed for, not as yet ventured on; and so the whole character recoils in all its parts from God. How often do we see such examples in those who have been brought to better thoughts by a sharp and threatening sickness, or by a heart-breaking cross in life, or by the edge of a cutting sorrow; and yet afterwards, in the re-

stored buoyancy of health or heart, have inwardly declined from the warmth and sincerity of their better resolutions! It may be they were earnest for a long season, and moved on a higher level, had loftier aspirations, purer joys, and keener sympathies. But, after all, by slight relapses, they sunk back, and grew common-place, and ended in a low, dull, dubious life, upon the very boundaries of wilful disobedience.

We must also learn from this example, that all such fallings back from our baptismal grace are great provocations of God's most righteous severity. The sin of Lot's wife was not only disobedience, but ingratitude. While Lot lingered, she was saved by the hand of angels; "the Lord being merciful unto them."

And we, brethren, who have been taken out of a dead world to be grafted into the Church of the living God, how shall not we be held in the bond of a twofold guilt? Even after many and great commendations for faith, and patience, and zeal for His name, He that walketh in the midst of the golden candlesticks warned the Church in Ephesus: "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will

come unto thee quickly, and remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent."[1] These are awful words. There are two things which God hates—backsliding and lukewarmness; and there are two which He will avenge—an alienated heart, and a will at war with His. Who can foretell what forfeiture of blessings, what withdrawal of grace, what clouding of the conscience, what hiding of God's countenance, what weakness, what confusion of soul, may be the righteous chastisement of a secret falling away of the heart from God? Thus even in this life God looks out upon those that reject Him, and troubles them: and who knows whereunto these things may grow? "Remember Lot's wife:" and who hath said, "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him."

If these things be so, how shall we hold fast our stedfastness? There is no other sure way but only this,—ever to press on to a life of deeper devotion—to a sharper repentance, and more earnest prayers—to a more sustained consciousness of God's continual presence—and to a keener watchfulness against the first approaches of temptation: but one or two plain rules is all that can now be offered in particular.

1. First of all, then, beware of remembering past

[1] Rev. ii. 4, 5.

faults without repentance. The recollection of our sins is safe only when it is a part of our self-chastisement. To look back upon them without shame and sorrow, is to offend again. God alone can simply behold evil without contamination; for memory, like a gnawing stream, gathers its tinge from the soil through which it winds its sullen way. So is it, above all, with impenitent recollection of sins once indulged. Our present character imbibes again the quality of past evil. We soon cease to fear what we can endure to think upon; and we soon grow again to behold the lust we once have served with the same eyes wherewith we looked upon it when we were its willing slave. There arises an interior assent to sins which we dare not outwardly commit. Past sin becomes present by a renewed adhesion of the heart; and even though we never offend again in the same outward form as before, some new and subtler evil is thrown out from the stock of our original disobedience.

2. Another thing to beware of is, making excuses for our present faults without trying to correct them. Nothing so wears down the sharpness of conscience, and dulls its perception of our actual state, as self-excusing. It is the most certain way to forfeit all true knowledge of ourselves; it directly fosters and strengthens the faults we are attempting to excuse; it weakens the corrective

powers of religion, the first and chief of which is a sincere confession of every swerving of the will from God. From this there can nothing come but a declining of heart, and an estrangement of the sore and irritable mind. And these things draw a darkness over the conscience, which hides the face of God. A little while ago, and such men were warm and forward in religion, now they feel chilled and backward; for the justified fault is a harboured canker, and the repulsion of an alienated will thrusts them away from God.

3. And lastly, beware of those particular forms of temptation which have already once held you in their power, or sapped your better resolutions. Every man has his own particular character, and every character its own particular cast. We have our characteristic faults and our characteristic weakness. Sometimes the same sins prevail again over the same man; sometimes an opposite sin; sometimes lesser faults, but in a greater multitude; sometimes fewer, but in a greater intensity. There can be no general precepts in this, any more than in the healing of the body. Beware of evils which have once prevailed against you, as knowing their malignity; beware of those which have never as yet had dominion, as not knowing what may be their fearful strength. Beware of a retroverted heart, and of the glancing aside of the imagination,

and of the slack obedience of the will. Angels' hands have been about you from the waters of holy baptism. Their guidance, unseen, unfelt, has drawn you again and again from ills which your hearts had chosen. In seasons of weakness they have stayed you up; in the hour of wavering they have kept you from falling. Before is the city of refuge—the world that lieth in wickedness is behind. "Escape for thy life: look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain: escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed."[1] "Remember Lot's wife."

[1] Gen. xix. 17.

SERMON IV.

THE MYSTERY OF MAN'S BEING.

PSALM CXXXIX. 14.

"I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

IN the beginning of this Psalm king David gives utterance to his wonder and awe at the mystery of God's invisible, universal presence. And from this he turns upon the mystery of his own individual nature. It is with hardly less of awe and wonder that he muses upon himself. He feels a consciousness that his own very being is an ineffable work of God—his own body of dust, wrought after some high type of wisdom and perfection—knit together in a wonderful order—quickened by an ineffable breath of God—filled with the powers of life, with the light of reason, and the rule of conscience—able to make present both things past and things to come, by memory and by foresight—to look through visible things, and make unseen things visible; and that all this should be himself—that all should be so blended into one, as to

revolve about his own will, and to be instinct with his own individual consciousness, — this it was that made him say, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made; and that my soul knoweth right well."

It was from musing after this sort upon God, that he turned to muse upon himself. It was, indeed, by pondering upon the mystery of God's nature, that he learned to stand in awe of the mysteriousness of his own; by dwelling on the awful thought of the unseen Being who fills all things, and quickens all things, he came to understand that he too was a being of a high descent, a mystery of God's almighty power, and that in the wonderful frame of his own bodily form there dwelt a conscious soul, whose eye was turned inwardly to gaze upon itself. Now, as this consciousness of what we are follows in a most certain order upon a true knowledge, so far as man can have it, of what God is, so it is also a condition absolutely necessary to all true religion. There can be no real fear, or reverence, or seriousness of heart, until a man has come to understand, at least in some measure, what he is — to realise his own awful structure and destiny.

We will consider, then, some of the thoughts which press upon a mind conscious of its own wonderful nature. It perceives in part an evident likeness,

and in part an equally marked unlikeness, to its Maker.

And, first; we know, by instinct and by revelation, that God has made us in part like to Himself, that is, immortal. This bodily frame we look upon, although it is a part of ourselves, is but the least part; although it is a partaker of Christ's redemption, it is but the shrine of the redeemed spirit: we feel that a man's self is his living soul—the invisible, impalpable spirit, which comprehends all his being with an universal consciousness, and is itself comprehended only of God. The body is its subject, its organ, its instrument, its manifestation, its symbol; it is not itself. All things that affect the body are external to it, separate from it. The very life of the body is but a lower energy of the true life of man, and is also separable and distinct. It may be quenched, and yet the soul shall live—it may be, shall live all the more mightily, and wield higher powers and intenser energies, as unclogged and disenthralled from the burden and the bondage of its lower life. It has a life in itself, which, embodied or disembodied, shall live on—outliving not the body alone, but the very world itself. All things visible shall decay; the very heaven shall pass away like a scroll, the very earth shall melt away under our feet; even now all things are hurrying past us, are dropping piecemeal, are dying daily: but

we shall live for ever. We shall rise on the heaving wreck of material things. All men, both good and evil, shall live on; all that ever have lived, live still; all that ever died since Adam,—Abel the righteous, and Enoch that walked with God, and John that lay on his Master's bosom, Balaam that tempted the Lord, Judas that sold his Redeemer, Herod that mocked the Lord of glory, the very men that nailed Him to the cross,—all are living in some unseen abode. In this life they were a mystery of mortality and immortality knit in one. They were in their season of trial; and their day ran out, and their award was fixed, and the mortal fell off like a loosened shroud, and the immortal spirit passed onward into the world unseen.

And, in the next place, we learn that our nature stands in a marked contrast to the divine; that the immortal nature which is within us is of a mutable kind, susceptible of the most searching changes. God, who is immortal, is also changeless. He is "I am that I am," "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." In Him "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." But we, who, by His almighty power, are made immortal like Himself, unlike Him, are daily changing. We are susceptible of forms and characters stamped upon us from without; of habits and tempers of soul fixed by energies within. We grow, we de-

cay, we fluctuate, we become what we were not, what we were we lose again; and yet we must be immortal. The most fearful and wonderful of mysteries is man. To be mortal and to be mutable, to be under the power of change and death, would seem, like the meeting of kindred imperfections, to be consistent; that we, who change daily, should change at last, once for all, from life to death, from being to annihilation, would seem like the carrying out of a natural law; and the last change to be like all other changes, save only in that it is the greatest and the last. But to be ever changing, and yet to be immortal; that after this changeful life ended there should be life everlasting, or the worm that dieth not, — bespeaks some deep counsel of God, some high destiny of man; something that is ever fulfilling, ever working out in us, whether we will or no.

And so, indeed, it is. We are here, upon our trial, for this end. We are sent into the world, that, by our own will and choice, we should determine our eternal portion. This is the great moral design and purpose of Him that made us; and therefore He made us as we are — mutable, that we may take our mould and character; and immortal, that we may retain it for ever.

1. Let us consider, then, first, that our immortal being is always changing for good or evil, al-

ways becoming better or worse. We came into this world with a bias of evil on our nature; but in holy baptism we received a gift which redressed the balance, and made us free to choose. From that day we have stood between two contending powers. On the one side, the world, the flesh, and the devil; on the other side, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; the powers of darkness and of light, of death and of life; the kingdom of Satan and the Church of Christ; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life,—the gospel of salvation, and the holy Sacraments; all these, as antagonist legions, have contended for us, and cast in turn their power and their hold upon us, and we have hung in the poise and vibrated to and fro, wavering in weakness and wilfulness, a spectacle to men and angels, till, for good or ill, choice or time has determined the suspense. And this is the key to all the moral phenomena we see around us. The ten thousand various and conflicting characters of men are, each several one, nothing more than the shape and attitude in which they finally issue from this moral conflict. All men are good or evil, just as they incline determinately to this or that side of this moral balance; and their determined inclination is their character. All our life long, and in every stage of it, this process, which we vaguely call the formation of cha-

racter, is going on. Our immortal nature is taking its stamp and colour; we are receiving and imprinting ineffaceable lines and features. As the will chooses, so the man is. Our will is ourself; and as it takes up into itself, and, as it were, incorporates with itself, the powers and the bias of good or ill—such we become.

2. In the next place, consider that this continual change is also a continual approach to, or departure from God. We are always tending to God or from God; and this must be by the force of moral necessity. We are always growing more or less like Him, and therefore nearer or further from Him. On these two lines all moral beings are for ever moving. The holy, the pure-hearted, and the penitent, have fellowship with angels, and walk with God, and God dwells in them with a growing nearness day by day; they are ever more and more one with Him, and partake more fully of the Divine nature, and are filled with the will of God: they abide in God, and God in them; they are one with Christ, and Christ with them: they are taken up as it were into the company of heaven, and, by the ascent of their moral being, climb upwards to the throne of God. But the sinful, the impure, and the impenitent, have their fellowship with fallen angels, and their moral being is in warfare against God, their will struggling and

clashing against His will; they are beset round about, but they are not dwelt in by His holy presence; the gulf between them and heaven is ever widening day by day: they are ever departing from God, and ever sinking downward to the abyss; and the shadow of the outer darkness already gathers upon their inmost soul. Now this, in truth and soberness, is the work which rests not, day or night, in the moral being of mankind. Heaven and hell are but the ultimate points of the diverging lines on which all are ever moving. The steady and changeless rise and fall of the everlasting lights is not more unerring. It is a moral movement, measured upon the boundaries of life and death; a change of nature, which, in the moral world, is a change of position and of standing before God,—it brings us nearer or casts us farther from Him.

3. And this leads us to one more thought: I mean, that such as we become in this life by the moral change wrought in our immortal nature, such we shall be for ever. Our eternal state will be no more than the carrying out of what we are now. After this life is over, there will be no new change—no new beginning—no passing the eternal gulf between good and evil. He that is unjust shall be unjust still; he that is filthy shall be filthy still; he that is righteous shall be righteous

still; and he that is holy shall be holy still. The two diverging lines shall then be at an impassable distance, and they that move upon them, it may be, shall move onward still, into a brighter glory, or a darker gloom—to a closer ministry, or a further banishment from God. For, in very truth, heaven and hell are not more abodes than characters. Abodes they are, where shall be gathered all men and angels, according as the award shall be; but that which makes the bliss or misery of each is not less the habit which has here been wrought into the moral being, and there is made absolute for good or evil. In this life the holiest will and the most saintly spirit is clogged and checked by the swerving and burden of the flesh. All men fall short of their high purposes; the best of men bear but little fruit; it ripens slowly and uncertainly, and often soon decays: but the will which has here struggled to perfect itself after the example of our Redeemer, shall there be perfected by His mighty working. He shall fulfil the work. They that have yearned to be holy shall be holy without blemish; they that have wept for their feeble services shall there excel in strength—what they would fain have been, they shall be. Their determination of will, and deliberate choice, and faithful toiling, shall fix the character of their

eternal lot. What through their weakness they could not here attain, He, of His gracious power, shall make them to be for ever.

And so, likewise, of evil men. The warning, and striving, and restraining of the Holy Ghost shall then be over; and all that in this life kept back the full outbreak of a sinful will shall be taken off. The whole power of evil, which lurks pent up in the hearts of the wicked, shall burst forth into a flame. The very air they breathe must kindle it. It may be they shall wonder at themselves, at the mystery of iniquity which has lain harboured in them. Their conditions in life so far repressed and masked them from themselves, that they did not fully know what they truly were: just as we often see men, by some outward change, put forth new and incredible powers of evil, which, before they were tried, no man could believe them to possess; and as we all know how the example of others,—their influence, their presence, the glance of their eye, and a thousand other outward checks,—will sustain in us a better habit, which, when they are removed, is altogether lost, and our true self rises to the surface, and overspreads the whole character, and puts out its full ungovernable strength. Such, beyond doubt, shall be the state of those whose will has here conflicted with the will of God.

There all check, all mitigation, all repression, shall be gone; and such as they would be now, if they dared, they shall be then for ever.

And if these things be so, with how much awe and fear have we need to deal with ourselves!

First of all, we must needs learn to keep a keen watch over our hearts. Every change that passes upon us has an eternal consequence; there is something ever flowing from it into eternity. We are never at rest: our moral life is like a running stream; its very condition is change. And these changes creep on us by such an insensible approach, that we hardly perceive them till they have established themselves. They are like the growth of our stature, or the change of our features,—most perceptible in the whole after-effect, but beyond the subtlest observation to detect in the manner and the moment of their mutations. So, too, our moral dispositions grow upon us. We know them by retrospect. They took their first spring from some unperceived or forgotten incident, winding themselves into our inmost being, and drawing it to their own shape. To pass by the grosser forms of sin, I would take, for example, a secret dislike of religion, which often comes from a soft, self-pleasing temper; or pride, springing from the accidents of life; or supercilious contempt of the Church's warnings, arising from a confidence in our own

judgment and opinion. These, being free from all grossness, and therefore compatible with all that the world exacts of a man, wind themselves imperceptibly around many who are otherwise blameless and upright. But, though free from all grossness, they are faults capable of great intensity. They stifle the very life of faith, wear out all reverence, excite a most restless and obstinate dislike of holiness, and turn the whole man aside from God with a most perfect estrangement of heart. They are sins more deadly for the very reason that they are spiritual. They dwell in that depth of our being which is most akin to the immortality of fallen angels.

Watch, then, over the changes and inclinations of your will; for every one bears upon eternity. Every energy lays in another touch upon your deepening character; every moment fixes its colours with a greater stedfastness. Remember that you are immortal; realise your own immortality. Remember it all day long, in all places: live as men whose every act is ineffaceably recorded, whose every change may be retained for ever.

And, again; we have need not only to watch, but to keep up a strong habit of self-control. How it is that every act we do leaves upon us its impression, we know not; but the scars and the seams of our bodily frame warn us of the havoc sin

makes in our unseen nature. The current of our thoughts, the wanderings of our imagination, the tumult of our passions, the flashes of our temper, all the movements and energies of our moral being, leave some mark, wither some springing grace, strengthen some struggling fault, decide some doubtful bias, aggravate some growing proneness, and always leave us other, and worse, than we were before. This is ever going on. By its own continual acting, our fearful and wonderful inward nature is perpetually determining its own character. It has a power of self-determination, which, to those who give over watching and self-control, becomes soon unconscious, and at last involuntary. How carelessly men treat themselves! Men live as if they had no souls. In their traffic of this life, they scheme as if they were to live for ever. In their preparation for death, they trifle as if there were no life beyond the grave. How easy is all self-control at the first! if neglected, how all but impossible at last! To most men, it must have somewhat of sharpness. To the unchastened it is galling and irksome; but what is this to the remorseful looking back and the fearful looking onward of the guilty spirit waiting for the day of doom!

Watch, therefore, and win the mastery over yourselves. Live so as you would desire to live

for ever. Speak and act as if you were now fixing your eternal state. Be such, that, if your moral being were now to be precipitated and made eternal, your portion should be in the kingdom of God. And commit yourselves to the great movement of His mysterious providence, by which He is working out the change and transfiguration of His saints. The vision which the prophet saw by the river Chebar[1] — a vision of many wheels and wondrous creatures of God, of a whirlwind, and a light infolding itself, full of movements seemingly opposed, but absolute in harmony — full of powers angelic and ministering — full of meaning and of mystery; all this is a parable of the Divine presence working through the complex unity of His Church. On His Church, as upon the potter's wheel, He hath laid our immortal being; and as it revolves, He shapes us with the unerring pressure of His hand, and the vessel of wrath rises into a vessel of glory. It is by His holy word and sacraments, by acts of homage and adoration, by a life of obedience, and by a wisely-tempered discipline of chastisement and peace, that He wins and conforms us to Himself. He is working upon you. That in you which shall never die is changing daily, is being moulded or marred, according as you yield to or resist the

[1] Ezek. i. 4.

working of His word and Spirit—is taking the eternal stamp of good or ill. To our eyes it is the Church, to our faith it is God Himself, that is changing us into the likeness of His Son.

SERMON V.

WORLDLY AFFECTIONS DESTRUCTIVE OF LOVE TO GOD.

1 St. John ii. 15.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

St. John here tells us that the love of the world thrusts the love of God out of our hearts. Now, this love of the world means a love either of things which are actually sinful, or of things not sinful in themselves, but hurtful and a hinderance to the love of God. The first is too plain to need a word. A love of sin must set a man at war with God: his whole inner being ranges itself in array against the Spirit of holiness. The second form of this truth is somewhat less clear, and far less thought of; and we will therefore consider it.

There are things, then, in the world, which, although not actually sinful in themselves, do nevertheless so check the love of God in us as to

stifle and destroy it. For instance, it is lawful for us to possess wealth and worldly substance; we may serve God with it, and consecrate it at His altar: but we cannot love wealth without growing ostentatious, or soft, or careful, or narrow-hearted; "for the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."[1] So, again, with friends and what is called society. It is lawful for us both to have and to love friends, both to enter into and to enjoy the pure happiness of living among them; but when we begin to find loneliness irksome, when we grow fond of being much in society, we are really trying to forget ourselves, and to get rid of sadder and better thoughts. The habit of mind which is formed in us by society is so unlike that in which we speak with God in solitude, that it seems to wear out of us the susceptibility of deeper and higher energies. Much more true is this when to the love of society is added a fondness for light pleasures, or a love of power, or a craving after rank and dignities. And so, once more, lawful as it is to be thoughtful and circumspect in the ordering of our life, and in thankfully enjoying the ease and happiness which God gives us, we cannot long have our thoughts on these things without becoming

[1] 1 Tim. vi. 10.

biassed with a sort of proneness to spare and to indulge ourselves.

Now, it is against such dangers as these that St. John warns us. They will, by a most subtle but inevitable effect, stifle the pure and single love of our hearts towards God; and that in many ways. For, in the first place, they actually turn away the affections of the heart from God. He so made our nature for Himself, that He alone is the lawful and true object of our supreme and governing love. Other lawful affections are not contrariant to this, but contained in it. The love to God presides over them all; orders, and harmonises, and preserves them in purity and health. But when they are loved immoderately, or chiefly, or before God, He is defrauded of so much of His own inalienable homage. They become to us as other gods, each one diverting our hearts from its straight and single direction towards Him alone. It is of our affection that He speaks when He calls Himself "a jealous God." Love of worldly things, then, plainly defrauds Him of our loyalty, and checks, if it does not so far prevail as absolutely to thrust our love to Him altogether out of our hearts.

And, in the next place, it impoverishes, so to speak, the whole character of the mind. Even the religious affections which remain undiverted are weakened and lowered in their quality. They are

like the thin fruits of an exhausted soil. The virtue and the fatness of the land have been drawn off and distributed into so many channels, that what remains is cold and poor. It is wonderful how characters of great original earnestness lose their intensity by entanglement in the lower affections of the world. They spend their energy on objects both so many in number, and so beneath the care of a regenerate spirit, that they lose all unity of heart and intention. They are even conscious to themselves that this is going on, sapping the foundations of their moral strength. Surely it is a sign of a poor mind to be greatly moved by little things; to have much fondness for the most harmless of this world's littlenesses; to love them and God, as it were, in one affection. There is an evident shallowness about such minds, a want of power to perceive the measures, and relations, and magnitude of things. Even their highest energies are slack and feeble.

Thus much, then, may be said generally. Now we will consider somewhat more closely the particular consequences of this love of the world.

1. It brings a dulness over the whole of a man's soul. To stand apart from the throng of earthly things, and to let them hurry by as they will and whither they will, is the only sure way to calmness and clearness in the spiritual life. It is by living much alone with God, by casting off the

burden of things not needful to the inner life, by narrowing our toils and our wishes to the necessities of our actual lot, that we become familiar with the world unseen. Fasting, and prayer, and a spare life, and plainness, and freedom from the cumbering offices and possessions of the world, give to the inner eye and ear a keen and piercing sense. And what is this but to say that, by such a discipline the powers of our regenerate life are unfolded and enlarged? But such a life is well-nigh impossible to the man that moves with the stream of the world: it carries him away against his will. The oppressive nearness of the things which throng upon him from without defrauds him of solitude with God. They come and thrust themselves between his soul and the realities unseen; they drop like a veil over the faint outlines of the invisible world, and hide it from his eyes. They ring too loudly in his ear, and throw too strong an attraction over his heart, to suffer him to hear and understand. And the spiritual powers that are in him grow inert and lose their virtue by the dulness of inaction. This is most clearly perceptible, not only in persons of a predominately worldly tone of mind, but in those who have been, and still are in some measure, religious; and none know it better than they. Perhaps the only feeling which long retains its keenness after the religious affec-

tions are deadened, is the fearful consciousness that they can no longer love God as they loved Him once. They are painfully alive to a sense of the eager and importunate sympathy, the warm and clinging fondness which they still have for the goings on of their worldly life, and the stunned and senseless heart with which they turn to the thought of God. When they are on their knees before Him, even at the foot of the altar, and in the very act of prayer, they feel in a strange unnatural posture; and are half in doubt whether it were not better to make no approach to Him at all, than to draw near with a heart so deaf and dull. Now to this, and, alas, often far beyond this, are many blameless and good-hearted people brought at last. Much trading, or much toiling for advancement, or much popularity, or much intercourse in the usages and engagements of society, or the giving up of much time to the refinements of a soft life,—these, and many like snares, steal away the quick powers of the heart, and leave us estranged from God. And this is the secret of the oppressive weariness which people who live in the world feel in all holy duties. The acts of religion, such as reading, thought, contemplation of the unseen, prayer, self-examination, the fasts and feasts, and offices of the Church, first seem to lose their savour, and are less delighted in: then they grow irksome, and are

consciously avoided. So it must be. When religion ceases to be a delight, it becomes a yoke. Serve God we must, either in freedom or in bondage; if not for love, then for fear. If we love the world, we shall only fear God. We shall turn to our profession or our calling, or to society, or to our pleasures in life, with speed and gladness, but to God with constrained prayers and reluctant confessions. We shall go to them with distant and equivocating hearts, and turn from them with a secret readiness which makes us tremble. How awfully do people deceive themselves in this matter! We hear them saying, "It does me no harm to go into the world: I come away, and can go into my room and pray as usual." O, surest sign of a heart half laid asleep! You are not aware of the change, because it has passed upon you. Once, in days of livelier faith, you would have wept over the indevoutness of your present prayers, and joined them to the confession of your other backslidings; but now your heart is not more earnest than your prayers, and there is no index to mark the decline. Even they that lament the loss of their former earnestness do not half know the real measure of their loss. The growth of a duller feeling has the power of masking itself. Little by little it creeps on, marked by no great changes, much as the dimness of the natural sight, which must reach to an advanced

point before it is detected to be more than a passing film. And so the inward affections lose all their freshness, and the pure light of the heart is overcast, and its love towards God grows cold. The mind is excited, and its feelings and powers drawn into life and play on every other side; but in the region which lies towards God it is bleak and lonely; and the faint gleams of a heavenly love, which must be fed by insights of the world unseen, (and, like fires which kindle as they vibrate, and are made intense by their own activity,) flicker and faint in the unwholesome neighbourhood of worldly affections.

2. I will notice one more consequence. As we grow to be attached to the things that are in the world, there comes over us what I may call a vulnerableness of mind. We lay ourselves open on just so many sides as we have objects of desire. We give hostages to this changeful world, and we are ever either losing them, or trembling lest they should be wrested from us. What a life of disappointment, and bitterness, and aching fear, and restless uncertainty, is the life of the ambitious, and covetous, and self-indulgent! merchants, trading at a thousand hazards; statesmen, climbing up to slippery places; men of letters, catching at every breath of fame; men of the world, toiling to sustain a great appearance,—how anxious, and

craving, and sensitive, and impatient of an equal do they become! How saddened, how ill at ease, how preyed upon by the fretting of unrest; and therefore how far from the calm inward shining of the love of God! Where this is, there is contentment, and a submissive will, and a glad consent in our present lot, and a simplicity which shields itself from the throng of manifold perturbations. But all these hallowed and happy tempers are frighted away by the writhing and the moaning of a worldly spirit, chafing against the visitations which invade or sever its earthly attachments. But it is not only in this form that the mind is made vulnerable by a love of the world. It lays itself open not more to chastisements than to temptations; it gives so many inlets to the suggestions of evil. Every earthly fondness is an ambush for a thousand solicitations of the wicked one. Through these he fills men with pride, vanity, vain-glory, —with ambition and jealous rivalry, with a greedy mind, with murmuring and discontent, with unthankfulness and mistrust of God. Any affection, either ill-directed or inordinate, passes into a temptation. It is a lure to the tempter, and a signal which betrays our weaker side; and as the subtle infection of evil tempers winds itself into the mind, the Spirit of the Dove is grieved by an irritable and unloving spirit. The very affections of the heart

recoil sullenly into themselves, and sometimes even turn against the objects of their immoderate fondness. In this way the love of the world becomes a cause of very serious deterioration of character. It soon stifles the love of God; and when that is gone, and the character has lost its unity, particular features unfold themselves into a fearful prominence. The chief among its earthly affections becomes thenceforth its ruling passion; and it so predominates over all the rest, and draws the whole mind to itself, as to stamp the man with the character of a besetting sin. And this is what we mean, when we call one man purse-proud, and another ostentatious, or worldly-minded, or selfish, and the like. The world has eaten its way into his soul, and "the love of the Father is not in him."

Now, if this is so, what shall we do? If it were possible for us to begin life over again, and to lay it out upon some definite and carefully adjusted plan, we might avoid the entanglements of the world. But almost every one of us already finds himself fully implicated in the embarrassments of life, and involved in a multitude of inferior attachments, before he is well aware. What, then, is to be done? We cannot withdraw ourselves. One has wealth, another a family, a third rank and influence, another a large business; and all these

bring with them an endless variety of duties and offices, and usages of custom and courtesy. If a man is to break through all these, he must needs go out of this world. All this is very true; but, at the same time, it is certain that every one of us might reduce his life to a greater simplicity. In every position in life there is a great multitude of unnecessary things which we may readily abandon: if we were to examine carefully the objects on which we bestow time and money and thought and earnestness, we should find many that are purely artificial. Many things we do only because others have done them before us; many by mere passive imitation. We are all over-ready to combine many characters, or pursuits, or offices together; to make heavier our own burdens; we learn to form exaggerated judgments of the worth and importance of things from other men; and all this gathers into a worldliness of character, and overspreads our mind, fearfully oppressing the religious life within us. Now they are happiest who are most discharged from contact with the world; who can sit, like Mary, at the Lord's feet without distraction. Most peaceful life, to have nothing to do with the conflicts, or changes, or possessions of this world: to have enough, and somewhat for them that lack; and friends, so as not to be desolate, and yet without carefulness! What is there

for them to do, but to wait on God, and to look out for the resurrection? But they are very few to whom this scarce and solitary lot is given. The great multitude of men are so interwoven in the tangled maze of relations and duties, that they must take the burden with the blessing; and yet even they would find that they are suffering their heart to be diverted and impoverished, and their affections to be dulled and deteriorated, by entanglement with many things from which a little boldness and decision would set them free. All that is not necessary may be cast off. Our unwariness, or our own free choice, has encumbered us with it; and it is in our own hands to undo it again.

And as for all the necessary cares of life, they need involve us in no dangers. In them, if we be true-hearted, we are safe. The inevitable relations of our earthly lot are the appointments and declaration of God's will to us. It is He that has surrounded us with them, and there is no danger in His dispensations. "God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man." Besides, even though a man were never so deeply implicated with the relations of life, there is no need that he should suffer them to usurp upon him. He may live in the midst of them with an unsubdued and single heart; he may meet them cheerfully, fulfil what they exact of him, but do them no homage;

yield to them no mastery over his inward purpose. He submits to them as to a rule of God's ordaining; accomplishing day by day his toil, or study, or professional offices; mixing, too, in life, taking pleasure in its pure happiness and fond affections, without fear or doubting, knowing that he is where God has willed his probation. But the deep movements of his heart are reserved for God. All other emotions are shallow, affecting only a portion of his spiritual life; but this extends over all, and concentrates all upon itself. It is only towards God that he turns with a perfect unity of will. And, besides that the necessary entanglements of our lot are thus in themselves safe and lawful, God in His mercy shields the obedient mind from the deteriorating effect of inevitable contact with the world. When He leads men into positions of great trial, whether by wealth, or rank, or business, He compensates by larger gifts of grace. The spiritual life is perpetually replenished by the "powers of the world to come;" and we find men who are the most burdened, and even overborne, by the thronging toils of daily life, or lured and solicited by the splendours of the world, not only holding out against the secularising action of worldly things, but even confirmed and elevated to a higher pitch of devotion. The world not only has no power to conform them to itself, but it

becomes a sort of counter-pressure, which forces them to take shelter in a secret life of self-renouncement. It keeps them ever on the watch, by a consciousness that to relax is to be in peril; and therefore it often happens that none are more dead to the world than they that have it around them in the largest measure. They have learned its emptiness and its bitterness, and recoil into themselves, as into the silence where the presence of God is heard. They have had many struggles with it, and gained many masteries, and suffered many wounds, and they have become estranged from it, and suspicious of all its advances and allurements; and have learned that, whensoever they have leaned upon it, an edge has pierced them, and that there is no safety but in God.

From all this, then, it is plain that we can never charge the worldliness of our hearts upon our lot in life; for our hinderances are either made by entanglement in things which are unnecessary, or, if in necessary things, are made through some inward fault of our own. Let us therefore no more pretend to excuse the withholding of our hearts from God, or the poverty and dulness of our affections, on the plea that the cares and duties of the world keep us back from a devoted life. Still less let us persuade ourselves, that the temptations to which we needlessly expose ourselves are inevitable

and appointed of God, or that we can resist their action. They have already overcome us, as soon as we suffer them to pass within the precinct of our daily life. We can still, however, with great ease, in due season, disentangle ourselves from all needless hinderances. The rest will be no let to the love of God. All pure loves may dwell under its shadow. Only we must not suffer them to shoot above, and to overcast it; for the love of God will not grow in the shade of any worldly affection. Above all, let us pray of Him to shed abroad in our hearts more and more of His love; that is, a fuller and deeper sense of His exceeding love towards us. It is thus He draws our love upward to Himself. "We love Him because He first loved us." The consciousness of this divine love comes down like a flood of light upon our darkened hearts, transfiguring all pure love of God's creatures with exceeding brightness, making all the affections of our spiritual life harmonious and eternal.

SERMON VI.

SALVATION A DIFFICULT WORK.

St. Matthew vii. 13, 14.

"Enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it."

In these words our Lord uttered a startling and awful truth. He declared, that they who make forfeit of eternal life are many, and they who gain it few. And the reason He affirmed to be this: that the way of destruction is broad, and the way of life narrow. By these words, He designed to express some great difficulty which lies in the way of salvation, some barrier which few surmount.

Now one thing is most certain; I mean, that this difficulty is not of God's making. He "would have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth."[1] "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from

[1] 1 Tim. ii. 4.

his way and live."[1] "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."[2] It is not, then, any difficulty ordained of God; and therefore it is plain that this difficulty must be on man's part. It is something in our own nature, viz. a moral difficulty. And what this is we will go on to see.

And, first, strange as it may seem, this difficulty will be found in the unwillingness of men to be saved. In holy Scripture this is broadly charged upon mankind. God asks, as pleading with His people, "Why will ye die?" And our Lord, weeping over Jerusalem, "How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"[3] And again, "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life."[4] And in the parable of the marriage-feast, a type of eternal life, "They all with one consent began to make excuse." It is manifest that there is in man's nature a deep and settled unwillingness, which is the first and greatest barrier to his salvation; an unwillingness not simply to be saved, that is, to be made everlastingly blessed—this, as a mere end of their desires, all men long

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 11. [2] St. John iii. 16.
[3] St. Matt. xxiii. 37. [4] St. John v. 40.

after—but an unwillingness to be saved in the way of salvation which God has ordained. They would fain enter into the strait gate, if they could do it without repenting, or denying self, or crossing their own will, or changing their way of life. If they might live on to the very threshold of His kingdom with an unchastened heart, and then, without struggle, shed off the unmortified body of sin and death, and enter new-born into His joy. If, after a life of self-indulgence, they could inherit eternal bliss, and so draw out the indolent, self-pleasing luxury of earth into the perfect blessedness of heaven, then, indeed, there would be no unwillingness; then the way of life should be broad enough, and many should go in thereat; and the way of destruction narrow, and there should be few that find it. But it is the severe holiness of salvation from which they shrink, because the carnal mind is enmity against God. They know that salvation is the being saved from sin, from its guilt and from its soil, from the power with which it rules over us, from the love with which we cling to it; —in a word, it is the health of the soul cleansed of its deadly sickness; the making of the sinful creature a holy being. From this men shrink by the recoil of their natural will. They too clearly see that it is from themselves that they must be saved; from what they love and pamper with perpetual license;

that they must renounce what they are, and become what they are not; that they must absolutely submit their will to be changed and subdued to His will;—and they are not prepared to put so great a yoke upon themselves. And, besides this, the thought of God's awful and searching presence, all pure, all holy, is insufferable. They feel the awful contrast of their own sullied spirits with His spotless sanctity; and they can neither endure to forsake the sins they doat on, nor dare to draw nigh Him without repentance. And this unwillingness which all men have by nature is greatly aggravated by the habit of their lives. Every act of sin excites it. Sinful acts, as they multiply into habits, and combine into a settled character, turn a man's heart aside from God with a most steadfast alienation. The power of evil, and the hold of the world, grow stronger upon such a man. He has more to break through, more to forsake, more to mortify; and the effort becomes daily harder and less hopeful. It is not only sins of the grosser sort that determine the will of man against God, nor habitual familiarity with evil alone; an angry or a sullen temper, jealousy, fondness for trifles and worldly vanity, levity, ambition, and the hardness of heart which is seldom far from a soft, self-pleasing mind,—all these things foster a secret dislike of the severities of personal religion, and make a man

unwilling to enter in at the strait gate. Nay, even the pure-minded have need to watch; for the world is ever shedding a silent influence upon us; it deadens the keen tact of conscience, and entangles us in unseen toils, and draws the will secretly from God. Many who are pure from grosser evil may forfeit eternal life through a slothful indisposition to strive against their conscious faults. This, then, is one form of the great moral difficulty which must be overcome by all who would enter into life.

2. There is yet another, not wholly unlike in kind, but more subtle, and therefore not less dangerous. Let us suppose a man to have made the first bold and successful struggle, to have burst through the bonds and trammels of an evil or a worldly life, and to have submitted himself to the merciful severity of God: thenceforward his life is a perpetual warfare; as before against God, so now against himself; and that because the reluctance of his natural will is not absolutely changed, but only held in check. He is willing in the main to submit to repentance and self-denial, and to the crossing of his daily choice; or, in a word, to yield himself up to be saved in the awful way of God's appointment. But though willing in the main purpose of his mind, and in the general resolution of his heart, he is found unwilling in the particular

instances which make up his actual salvation. He is willing to be delivered from all sins, until he is tempted. Each particular temptation has its lure and its spell to draw him to a new consent. His old disease returns upon him in detail. There is an uncertainty, a weakness, and a wavering about such men,—a readiness to pass impostures upon their own conscience: and all these make it hard for them to win eternal life.

The reasons of this are many. The power of his old habits is upon him still; and, as the original fault of man's nature inclines him to evil generally, so they give a man a leaning and proneness to particular sins. His will is weaker on that side where it has been wont to yield; he is more vulnerable, more liable to be tempted,—as a constitutional liability to any sickness makes a man more readily take infection; for his former habits have laid up a provision for future falls. They leave in him something upon which temptation may kindle; in the words of a wise spiritual guide and bishop of the Church, they are like a taper newly quenched, which starts again into a flame at the first approaches of a light. Most unlike to Him in whom the prince of this world, when He came, had nothing on which to fasten. On Him temptations fell harmless, as sparks are quenched upon the surface of a pure fountain.

And, once more; in such a man as we speak of, the new strength of better habits is not as yet confirmed. And here again the power of past evil reappears. It not only claims a dominion of its own, but it mars the beginnings of a holier character. It perpetually breaks up the first foundations, unsettling them as soon as they are laid, baffling our toil, and mocking us by continual defeats. No man knoweth, but God only, what is the hurt inflicted on man's spiritual nature by familiar consent to evil; what is the deterioration of the moral being in the scale of His redeemed creatures. It scathes and deadens the spiritual sense, and leaves fearful scars and seams on our inmost soul. It seems to make us less susceptible of holiness: for by a course of disobedience not only is the antagonist resistance of the mind increased, but even its passive powers are diminished. As, for instance, what is it that hinders the deeper sorrow of repentance, but a former habit of treating sin with levity? What makes devotion well nigh impossible, but a past habit of living without prayer? What makes it so hard to sustain a habitual consciousness of God's presence, but an early habit of living without that consciousness? There has come over the spiritual nature an inaptness, and often an antipathy. As in some men the keenness of the eye and ear is blunted,

and the very first laws of harmony and beauty became unintelligible, and even irksome; so is it with holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. We squander and abuse the mysterious powers of our spiritual being, and daily create around us new obstructions in the way of our salvation, narrowing the path and straitening the gate by which alone we can enter into life.

But hitherto I have seemed to speak only of those who, after an evil or worldly life, turn to repentance. And yet this warning is for all. It was spoken absolutely. To all mankind, as fallen men, the way of life is not more blessed than it is arduous. And that for this reason, because "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."[1] There must pass on each a deep and searching change. And this change, though it be wrought *in* us of God, is wrought *through* our striving. It is no easy task to gird up the energies of our moral nature to a perpetual struggle. The most watchful feels as one that strives against the half-conscious drowsiness of an oppressive poison; the purest, as he that leaves upon driven snow a dark and sullying touch; the most aspiring, as a man that aims his shafts from a strained and slackened bow; the most hopeful of eternal life, as one that toils for a

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 50.

far shore in a rolling and stormy sea. It is a hard thing to be a Christian. It is a hard thing to keep ourselves unspotted from the world. It is a hard thing to force our way, making an armed retreat into a position of safety; for sin, that great and manifold mystery of ill, whose root no man hath ever found, whose goings forth were before the world was made, and whose legions are unseen, hovers around with a terrible strength, and still more terrible craft. It ever hangs upon our skirts, and harasses our way to life; it waits through every day, and watches in every hour; it besets all our paths, and lurks beside all our duties; it mingles in our toils, and hides in our secret chamber, and masks itself under our religion, and follows us to the altar of God. Through all this we have to win our way to life. "We wrestle not with flesh and blood"—for then we might endure it, beholding our enemy and grappling with him face to face, —"but we wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."[1] These throng the way to life, and cast down the unwary, and overbear the wavering soul, and mar the beginnings of repentance: therefore are they who find eternal life but few.

Such, then, is the warning of our Lord. And

[1] Ephes. vi. 12.

these are some of the many difficulties which beset our way to heaven. We are bid to strive. Salvation is not the by-play of our idle hours, when the mind is wearied with over-toiling for this life, or cloyed with the oppressive customs of the world. It demands a manly and a resolute heart, or that still strength which faith gives to the most feminine and gentle spirit.

Beware, then, of an easy, acquiescing temper, which lulls you to be secure. What is meant by "wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction," but that a man needs only to follow his own will; only to let his thoughts, and lusts, and words wander and run on unchecked, and he is in as fair a way to perish, as a ship without a helm, where there is but one haven and a thousand shoals? By a natural law man leans towards destruction. It may be called the gravitation of a fallen being; and let a man only be at ease in himself, and satisfied with what he is, and consent to the usurping customs of the world, drawing in the unwholesome breath of refined evil, and letting his moral inclination run its natural course, without check or stay, and he will most surely tide onward, with an easy and gentle motion, down the broad current of eternal death. Such a man is seldom strongly tempted. The less marked solicitations of the tempter are enough. The suggestion of

a great sin might rouse his conscience, and scare him from the toils. We may take this, then, as a most safe rule, that a feeling of security is a warning to be suspicious, and that our safety is to feel the stretch and the energy of a continual strife.

But there is also another thing to remember. Our blessed Lord did not give this warning to discourage, but to rouse us. He well knew that men always despise things easy to be done; that they think what may be done easily may be done at any time; and that what may be done by a little effort is often never done at all. And men are ever ready to believe that it is no hard task to enter into life; and this, as knowing neither the holiness of God's kingdom, nor the sin that is in themselves. He therefore told them the naked truth, startling, awful, and unpalatable as it must ever be; and by this He tried the reality and strength of their intentions. Let no man, therefore, go away cast down. A consciousness of difficulty is to the true of heart a spur to efforts, and therefore a pledge of success at last. Only resolve to win eternal life, and He will accept your resolution as a pure offering. Measure your daily life upon your resolve; shun all things that can betray your stedfastness; cleave to all that may strengthen or confirm your vow. Only be true to yourselves; and all help and all succour shall be given you. Twelve legions of angels

shall wrestle for you, rather than that one faithful spirit perish from the way of life. To this end you were born, and for this cause came you into the world, that you should inherit the kingdom of God. Lose this, and all is lost. "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

SERMON VII.

A SEVERE LIFE NECESSARY FOR CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS.

St. Luke ix. 23.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

We read in the Gospels both of St. Matthew and of St. Mark, that this startling precept was given at the time when Peter had been sternly rebuked for his misguided affection for his Lord. It was at the same time, when in the foresight of His coming agony, the Lord Jesus began to teach them what things the Son of man should suffer; and Peter, in the forwardness and blindness of his heart, "took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee. But He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." And then, to shew the breadth of this great law of suffering, and how that

the law which reached even unto Him bound also every living soul that followed Him, He said unto them all, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." And thus, by words between a proverb and a prophecy, He foreshewed them both His own lot and theirs: He taught them the mysterious order of His unseen kingdom; how that He and His must all alike suffer, all deny self, all bear the cross. Again and again, through His whole ministry, He threw out this strange lure to win them more closely to Himself. It was so He strengthened His followers against the rending asunder of households and of kindred: it was so He tempered the over-ready eagerness of some that would follow Him before they had reckoned up the cost: it was so He sought to bind the rich young man for ever to His service, by one more, and that the last and strongest link. And the same deep truth we trace throughout the whole texture of His words and deeds: His own visible self-denial, and the cross which He daily bore, alike bespoke the lot of all that would be His. And what His life ever testified, He here expressly declared. And His words are both a bidding and a warning: they bid us that we come after Him; they warn us that we must deny ourselves; and they teach us that self-denial is the absolute condition of His service: or, in

other words, that without self-denial no man can be a faithful Christian.

And how universally this great condition has been fulfilled in all His true servants, is shewn by the whole history of the Church. The apostles, martyrs, confessors, bear witness with one voice to the same mystery of suffering. They testify that the badges of Christ's people are sufferings for Christ's sake ; and even they to whom it was given to believe in Christ, but not to suffer for Him, even the fellowship of all saints, conspires in the same awful testimony. They have each one borne the cross—each in his own unnoticed way ; even though the nighest to them, it may be, knew it not : in some hidden grief, in some despised affliction, in some thing they burned to utter, but never dared to speak. Though the form of their affliction was invisible, yet they visibly bore the cross ; and in bearing it, they shewed whose steps they followed. The character which was upon them was a legible countersign of their claim to be His servants. They had about them an integrity and completeness of the moral life, a fulness and distinctness of character ; standing out from the world around, and yet dwelling in it ; separate, and yet mingled in it ; in contact with it, but unsullied by its touch ; external to it, but guiding and checking its course ; moving it, but not borne along with

it; though in most things like other men, and to most eyes undistinguishable among the throng which gathers in kings' palaces, or learned schools, or busy marts, yet to eyes whose sight is purged, bearing most visible tokens of their Master's calling. We see in them the mind of Christ; the high dignity of an austere calmness; a greatness of soul which the world's busy fretfulness can seldom ruffle; a voluntary disentanglement from all the world counts dearest; a habitual self-mastery in foregoing honours, gains, and happiness, in choosing hardness, contempt, and isolation. By these the saints of all ages bear their witness to this great law of Christ's regenerate kingdom, that without denying self no man can serve Him.

But we must go further. Our Lord does not only tell us that this *shall* be so, but that it *must* be so. "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me, *cannot* be my disciple." It is not so much a general fact in the history of Christendom, as an universal law working out its own fulfilment. It is no accidental dispensation or arbitrary condition imposed upon the Church by the will of Him we serve, but the inevitable law of a deep moral necessity; for it is not more certain that without holiness no man can serve Him, than that without self-denial no man can be holy. And so it must be from the nature of mankind, and the nature of

Christ's service. For what is man's nature but sinful flesh? and what His service but a sharp corrective? What is man's sin but the domination of self-will? and what is the corrective but its abasement and abolition? What is each several characteristic form of sin, but self-will lusting on every side, and predominantly in some one direction? and what is our enfranchisement from sin, but the quelling of sinful lusts by Christ's Spirit working in us through self-denial? No two powers can be more antagonist than man's nature and Christ's service; and the struggle issues, as either power prevails, in apostacy or in self-denial.

We will take one or two particular proofs of this moral necessity.

1. In the first place: without crossing and denying of self, there can be no purifying of the moral habits. Without a true compunction and a tender conscience, purity of heart, and the energy of a devout mind set free from the thraldom of evil, no man can have fellowship with Christ; and no man can have these without self-denial. There hangs between Him and the soul which is sullied by permitted lusts, a dark and impenetrable veil. No holy lights stream through upon it; no softening influence pierces the inner gloom; no invitations from above draw up the sullen mind towards heaven; no yearnings of heart stretch forth their hands unto

God; the whole inmost soul is bent into a challenging array, or chilled by cold estrangement from God's holy presence. And so it must be in every man while his moral habits are not purified; and, though there may be many shades, some of a more and some a less pronounced and settled character, yet there are, after all, only two main classes. A man must either deny or indulge himself. There is no middle or indifferent state —for the not denying is indulgence; it is throwing the reins on the neck of his lusts, though he may lack boldness to set the spur; it is rather the want of self-denial, than any conscious and deliberate purpose of sinning, that solves the case of most habitual sinners. Positive sins gather and fester in the untended moral habit before men are aware that they have so much as gained an entrance. It may be, they never sought the sin; they were not forward in the temptation; they did not invite it; they were minded not to indulge it: it may be, they were somewhat troubled at it—only they did not deny it; and so the plague fastened upon them. Out of these beginnings issue oftentimes the most settled and deliberate forms of vice, which either so blind men's hearts that they cannot trace Christ's footsteps, or utterly turn them back from following Him—sometimes for ever.

2. And so, again, even with those who have for

a while followed His call, how often do we see the fairest promise of a high and elevated life marred for want of constancy! They had no endurance, because they had no self-denial. What is more common than to see men whose earlier years have been shielded from the grosser contact of evil, or whose manhood has been, for a season, overcast by some heavy chastening—such men outwardly consistent, it may be, for years, and yet at last shrinking from hardness, and weary of His correction. They endure for a while; but in time of temptation, by change of lot, or by some new condition of life, such as wealth or elevation, or by some sifting trial, fall away. And what is it but the lack of self-denial which brings out such moral anomalies as we daily see? As, for instance, men of excited sensibility, with hearts impenetrably hard; or with benevolent impulses, but merciless through self-indulgence; or with devout minds, but soft, and without fibre enough to wrestle for the truth; or full of good intentions, but so flexible as to accomplish nothing, so languid as to hold fast by nothing. A self-sparing temper will make a man not only an utter contradiction to his Lord, but even to himself. Only let difficulties gather and hedge him in, and, though honest in the feeble longings of his heart, he will compromise himself with petty equivocations, or crooked dealing, just within the verge of self-evi-

dent duplicity; or he will explain away his meaning, and wear down the severe truth of his principles, and come out of the trial no better than a worse man would issue from a like temptation.

3. And still further; without self-denial there can be no real cleaving of the moral nature to the will of God. I say real, to distinguish between the passive and seeming attachment of most baptised men, and the conscious, energetic grasp of will by which Christ's true disciples cleave to their Master's service. The faith of many is no more than a torpid, immature assent to things they cannot deny. There is no act of the will in it. They pay a cheap tribute in the understanding, to buy off the obedience of their hearts. They know the Gospel to be logically true; but their moral nature has at the most a dull, flitting sympathy with the world unseen. They rather gaze after Christ than follow Him. And so they linger on through life, dreaming of self-denial: and are all the harder to be roused, because they are so invincibly persuaded that their dream is a reality. And yet, after all, they have never once stirred themselves to so great an effort as to make a choice between Christ's service with its cross, and a smooth easy path with no crown in heaven. They have but listened without gainsaying; or lived without great swervings from the first principles of right. It may be, they have looked on

while the Church celebrates her mysteries: they have been assessors at her worship, and spectators at her fasts and festivals: at the most, they have gazed upon the visible form of her rites and sacraments. But all this is external to the *will*. They have chosen nothing, and grasped nothing. They have been encompassed by a system, but not incorporated with it.

For these, and for many more like reasons, it is plain that, if any man will be a true follower of his Lord, and live after the Exemplar to which in his regeneration he was pledged, he must needs put this yoke upon himself. "The disciple is not above his Master." The whole earthly life of Him we follow; the whole history of His Church, thickset with the shining lights of His true servants; the holiness of our calling; and the sin that dwells within us,—all alike teach us how we must make choice between self-indulgence and His service. It is self-evident, and inevitable; and by this law our probation is brought to a simple but a fearful issue. Either we are now, at this time, denying ourselves, or we are not Christ's disciples in that deep inward sense which all but shuts out the many who by baptism are made His. And that we may ascertain whether it be so with us, we have need to ask:

First, In what do we deny ourselves? It would

be very hard for most men to find out what one thing, in all the manifold actings of their daily life, they either do or leave undone simply for Christ's sake. The greater number of men live lives of mere self-pleasing. They take the full range of all things not absolutely forbidden. They live ever on the very verge of license, and within a hair's-breadth of excess. Such, for instance, as live at ease with large revenues, and a full fare, and costly furniture, and a retinue of friends—filling a large field in the world's eye. To such men the burden and the sharpness of the cross are strange, uneasy thoughts. They feel the antipathy of their whole inner being to the severe happiness of a Christian life. They would fain break through the heavy bonds which weigh upon the sated soul; but the weariness of the work, and the sharpness of the toil, is too much for them; and they sink back with the sluggard's portion of baffled wishes and a declining hope.

Again; there are many who fare more hardly —who have fewer offers of this world's favour, and accept them sparingly; and they would seem to be of a self-denying cast: but, after all, it is no more than the self-imposed bondage of an earthly soul, wearying itself for some mere earthly purpose. Carefulness about money, love of praise, rivalry, ambition, a reckless and turbulent spirit, a

desire to be thought self-denying and severely religious, will often throw out a character which may be mistaken for self-denial: and self-denial in one sense it is. Such men pursue their deliberate aim with a concentration of powers, and a putting forth of energies, which might win for them a high place in God's kingdom. They will renounce every thing which can relax the intension of the mind; they lay out time, toil, substance; they forego ease, pleasure, the gifts of life and home, to reach some aim on which the gaze of their heart is fastened. And yet, after all, it may be no more than a miserly greediness to amass a fortune, or the lust of power, or an earthly vanity to make a family, or the love of some poor proximate end, which shall perish on this side of the resurrection. And so, perhaps, with each one of us, it would be hard, after separating off all things which a craving for men's favourable judgment, respect for our own interest, the promptings of a more refined regard for self, produces, to trace out any one thing which we do or forego simply and altogether for the sake of Christ. This is all the harder to discern in lives that are disciplined by the happy order of a system such as ours. We live in an age which does homage to propriety of conduct. All things around check and restrain us; all the lesser moralities of life chasten and throw us in upon ourselves, and

bring us so near to the likeness of self-denial, that we may well seem, even to our own eyes, to be self-denying. And yet, after all, if we can find nothing less ambiguous by which to verify our claim to be Christ's true followers, no seal, or countersign, of that service which has left its visible impression on all the fellowship of saints —ours must be a fearful self-deceiving. Surely, if we have no mark upon us which He will own, when "the sign of the Son of Man" shall be revealed— no imprinted tokens of His sharp crown, or of His sharper cross—how then shall they know us for His, who shall be sent to gather His elect from the four winds of heaven?

2. And if we cannot find any thing in which we deny ourselves already, we must needs resolve on something in which we may deny ourselves henceforward. And in resolving, we should remember that it is a poor self-denial which foregoes only inexpedient or unnecessary things. These are not the subject-matter of self-denial. It is in things lawful and innocent, and, it may be, gainful and honourable, and in keeping with our lot in life, and such things as the world, by its own measure, esteems to be necessary things, that we may really try ourselves: as, for instance, in living more simply than our station in life may prescribe, or our fortune require; in withdrawing from contests

of precedence; in contenting ourselves with a lower place, and a less portion, than is our acknowledged due; in living toilsome lives of well-doing, when we might do well and yet live without toiling;—in these, or in points of the like kind, we may find matter for self-denial, and that in many ways. A man may either deny himself greatly, and once, so that his whole after-life shall bear the marks of it, —as in giving up some high and luring offer, and choosing a lowlier and a simpler one; in foregoing some dearly cherished purpose, that he may be more absolutely His; in crossing some deep yearning of the heart, that he may have more to lay out in His service: or he may so order his self-denial as to make it a daily and continual sacrifice; he may so mete out his acts as to spread them over a wider surface, and along a more protracted time; which is, indeed, like retaining what we have, and administering it by a continual stewardship, compared with the selling at one cast all that we possess.

And we must remember that, besides these universal obligations, which bind Christians in all ages of the Church, there are also particular and special reasons binding us more strongly now. We have need to lay some such yoke upon ourselves, because we have to pass through no persecution for our Lord. We have no rending choice to make, no forfeiture of all things to endure. We

should suffer, rather, were we to forsake His service. All the prescriptions of well nigh two thousand years, and all the unwritten customs of life constrain us to follow Him. We were made His servants by no will of our own: we may seem to abide with Him, and yet have no clinging of our moral nature to His holy fellowship. Our Christianity is indistinguishably blended with the unconscious habits of our passive life. We have never been tested, never in peril for our hope's sake, never forced to choose between suffering and apostacy. And therefore, under the fairest seeming, there may lurk a fearful, variable temper, which, in the day of trial, would betray the Lord, and forfeit the crown of life. We have little opportunity of knowing whether we could endure hardness, save by putting ourselves upon some trying rule. Perhaps many live and die unknown to themselves, fully persuaded that they are what indeed they are not: many think themselves to be His, who will not be found among "Christ's at His coming." And there is still a further reason, and that is, because the Church imposes on her members no private and particular discipline. Their self-denial, therefore, is the individual act of each. The framing of our own private order of religion is, for the most part, left to the individual conscience. And for minds of a devoted cast, it may be, this is

well. It may elicit higher forms of a more conscious self-oblation. But, for the most part, we have need to look to it, that what the Church does not peremptorily require, we do not forget to practise. For the health of the moral character, it is absolutely necessary that we have some definite rule; and we have no need to strain after great occasions—for our every-day life abounds in manifold opportunities of self-discipline: we shall find them in the hours of prayer, in the practice of charity, in alms-deeds, in fasting, in abstinence, in straitening our ease, in abstaining from lawful, and to ourselves expedient, things for others' sakes, in curbing our pleasures, in bearing slander, in forgiving injuries, in obeying our superiors, in yielding to our equals, in giving up our liberty for the good of others, in crossing the daily intentions of our will. In these inward and hidden motions of the mind, we may keep clear both from excitement and from eccentricity, and yet live a life mortified and separate from the world we see, and in sympathy with the world unseen. And the man thus purged of self is drawn ever more and more within the veil; the realities of faith stand out ever more and more before his eyes in awful majesty; and he lives no more unto himself, but unto Christ his Lord. He is ever drawing nigher to His throne; and his shall be a calm lot on earth,

and a high destiny in heaven, even as his that said, "Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus;"[1] and, in the clear foresight of his departure, when the toil and the cross were well nigh ended, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day."[2]

[1] Gal. vi. 17. [2] 2 Tim. iv. 8.

SERMON VIII.

CHRIST OUR ONLY REST.

St. Matthew xi. 28–30.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

With these gracious promises our blessed Lord drew to Him the people who were toiling and struggling with the burdens of this saddened and sinful world. He saw not only the evil, but many a good man wearying himself in vain.

Among those to whom He spoke, he saw, besides those that were heavy laden with their own sins, many who were burdened with evil traditions and unmeaning customs; who were fainting under the yoke which had been laid upon them as a schoolmaster to bring them unto Christ. He promised them *rest*, if they would come, and learn, and take on them His yoke, *i. e.* if they would obey and follow Him, if they would believe and be like Him. Many there were, as Andrew and Levi, who gave

up their former ways, and all that they had, and made the trial, and found the promise true. They found rest in forgiveness and a quiet mind, in a heart chastened into a holy calm, and in the hope of their Master's kingdom. Now what He promised them when He was seen of men on earth, He has both promised and fulfilled ever since from heaven. He has ever been in the world by His unseen Spirit — pleading, drawing, persuading men to take His easy yoke. This He has done by His Church in the world. Among all nations He has gone, offering rest to every weary soul. Man cannot tell what has ever been the ineffable yearning of the heathen world; what tumultuous cries of spiritual sorrow have been heard in the ears of God. There has ever been the voice of conscience, and the sting of guilt, and the fears of defenceless purity, and the remorse of conscious sin. Without a doubt, among the myriads of eternal beings who thronged the face of the earth at Christ's coming, there were tens of thousands who felt higher and purer aspirations, who sighed and strove for light and truth in the dark and stifling bondage of heathenism. And to these, in due season, Christ in His Church went preaching, as "to spirits in prison," bringing the balm of meekness, and the peace of a lowly heart. When they heard Him, they were drawn to Him by an irresistible persuasion. They had found what

they darkly longed for — and all the wants and miseries of their being clung to His healing touch. They were "refreshed with the multitude of peace."

And not only so, but within the Church itself, and to this day, Christ ever calls, in these soft, persuasive words, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden." It is not only among the unregenerate spirits of men, but among those also who have been born again by His gracious working, that He finds toiling and burdened hearts. As He stands in the midst of His Church, and beholds our daily life, and all the hurrying to and fro of weary and restless spirits, He sees and pities our blind infirmities: for many are His by baptism, who have never learnt of Him; many know Him in word, who have never borne His yoke; many have seemed to draw nigh, who have found no rest unto their souls.

For instance, He sees among us the very same kinds of men as among the Jews — sinners "laden with sins" — men conscious of guilt, hating the sin for its after-agonies, but yielding to its momentary bait. The throes and torments of Christian men are worse even than the terrors of the heathen or the Jew. For Christians know of life and immortality: to them Tophet and Gehenna are no parables, but well-known and horrible realities. The tongue of man cannot tell the scourge, and fear, and suffo-

cating burden of guilt seen in the light of an illuminated conscience. And this is all around us, among baptised men. It is the cause of their stubbornness in sin, because it is the root of their despair.

But, besides these, there are men of a worldly heart, who weary themselves day and night in the round of gain or selfishness, "lading themselves with thick clay;" early and late full of care—with furrowed brows and withered hearts; wearing a false cheerfulness, being sick in their inmost soul. This world fairly frets such a man's heart through and through; to him the world is overgrown, and all its cares are swollen, to an unnatural greatness. He has no sight of the world unseen, to check and balance the visible world; and therefore this world is all things to him. Hence foolish choices, and inordinate cravings, and bitter disappointments. I am not speaking of men who are so greedy of gold as to pass into a proverb; but of a common sample of men, whose aim in life is to gain no more than an ordinary measure of wealth, or to rise, as they say, to becoming places of dignity and power. If you could read the inner life of such men, you would find their minds wound up to an incessant and unrelieved stretch, which is ever at the highest pitch. At last it makes them weary of themselves, and they break down in bitterness or imbecility. There

is also all the aching of disappointment, and the irritation of rivalry, and the fear of miscarriage, and the foresight of unpitied falls; and well is it if there be not also the hidden smouldering of an angry jealousy, and the wincing soreness, which ambitious and envious minds feel at the very name of a successful neighbour. What burden heavier than this dead world bound about the heart of man? what yoke more galling than a restless, craving spirit?

And, once more; there are others who are not less truly labouring in vain, though they know it not: I mean those that are making happiness their aim in life. There are many who ply this unprofitable, disappointing trade. I am not speaking of sensualists, or empty-hearted followers of this vainglorious world; but of grave and thoughtful people, whose theory of life is the pursuit of individual happiness. They look forward, as a matter of course, to certain great acts and stages of life, as to things predetermined by a customary law. Oftentimes, indeed, their aims and desires are very reasonable; sometimes sadly commonplace. They choose out, for instance, some of life's purer fountains, running through a broken cistern, at which to slake their thirst to be happy. There is something lacking — something without which their being is not full. They take, it may be, many ways of meet-

ing this craving of their hearts; but diverse as are their schemes, their aim is all one—they have a predominant desire to be happy, and to choose their own happiness; and therefore they are full of disappointments, perpetually wounded on some side, which they have laid bare to the charms of life. The treacherous reed is ever running up into the hand that leans on it. They are ever giving hostages, as it were, to this changeful world, and ever losing their dearest pledges; and so they toil on, trying to rear up a happiness around them, which is ever dropping piecemeal, and, at last, is swept away by some chastening stroke; and then, no wiser than before, they set themselves, with a bruised and chafing heart, to weave the same entanglements again.

From what has been said, it follows plainly:

First, that all our unrest and weariness is in and of ourselves. It is either the slavery of some tyrannous sin, or the scourge of an impenitent memory, or the indulgence of some fretful, implacable temper, or some self-flattering and sensitive vanity, some repining discontent at what we are, or some impotent straining after what God has not willed us to be, or some hungering for an earthly happiness, with all the chill and faintness of heart which arises from the ever-present consciousness that what we crave for, even though we had it,

would fail to satisfy; besides all these, the weary recurrence of night and day, laboriously spent in toiling on towards an end they never reach,—these, I say, and only these, or such-like, make men weary and desolate. If they would only burst through this thraldom of indulged faults, or break the spell of this cheating, benumbing world, they should soon find rest to their souls. But so long as they run on in the ring of evil or vain desires, God will not give them rest; nay, should He give it, they would soon stifle it in the depth of their clouded souls, or barter it away to hold fast their earthly choices.

Once more; we may learn that it is only in Him that we can find rest; that is, it is only by learning of Him, yielding ourselves up to Him, and living for Him, that we can find release from the causes of our disquiet, or rest for the deep cravings of an immortal being.

The main and original fault in all our toiling after rest is this: we forget that peace with God, and the purification of our own nature, is the absolute condition to our ever reaching it. Here men stumble on the very threshold; and here it is that Christ will have us make the first step. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart." The first step to rest is, to have forgiveness in the blood-shedding of Christ,

and to have His mind renewed in us. It is thus that we are delivered from ourselves. Even though men should gain all they labour after, yet, without this, happiness would be as far off as ever; it would fly before them as the horizon, which they are ever following after, but never reach. In the very midst of success, the bitterness of the fallen nature would rise to the surface, and taint all the joy. How uneasily does a cheerful look sit upon the face of the happiest worldly man! how soon it fades, and the settled aspect of uncertainty return and overcast his brow! There is a worm that dieth not at the root of all—a "sorrow of the world" which "worketh death." It is only the virtue that goes out from Christ that can disinfect us of our natural sadness. Nothing but a devout life of repentance and self-discipline at the foot of His cross, can avail to free us from ourselves. Seek, then, forgiveness, and the gift of a broken heart. Ask of Him the words of peace —"Thy sins be forgiven thee;" and the words of purity—"I will; be thou clean." He will lay on you that sweet yoke of which He spake in the mountain of beatitudes: Blessed are the poor in spirit, the mourners, the meek, the hungry and thirsty for righteousness, the merciful, the poor, the peacemakers, the persecuted. He will change your inward soul by His purifying breath. As you

fall down before Him, He will lift upon you the light of His countenance, which transfigures all on whom it falls into the likeness of Himself. Be sure that in Him only can the deep cravings of our immortal being find enough. He has so made man's heart for Himself, that it is restless ever until it finds rest in Him.[1]

This is the master-key to all earthly disappointments. Men choose a false, cheating happiness, in the stead of true. They choose things which have nothing akin to their immortal nature. All earthly things are too lifeless and dull for the tact of spiritual beings. Something higher, purer, more intimate and searching, is needed for a regenerate man: or only a part, and that the lower, of his reasonable being is affected by the fullest earthly happiness; and when men have chosen even the best of earthly things, the purest and highest,—such as intellectual employments, or domestic happiness,—they find it variable and fleeting. It wears dull, or soon changes to a cloyed satiety. There is an ever-springing care, and a thrilling anxiety, which pierces through all such happiness at its best. Even when God is not forgotten, it is not enough; and without Him it is all an exciting and empty dream. O that men would learn of the Psalmist! "Delight thyself in the Lord; and He

[1] St. Augustine.

shall give thee the desires of thine heart."[1] It is not for man to choose happiness as the end of life—but God: to delight in God, and then none of his desires shall fail. As they are all laid up in God, so he has them all fulfilled. If it be good for him to be happy, he shall have happiness; if not, it is happiness to him to lack what God in love withholds.

But God would have all men happy. As He has no pleasure in the death of a sinner, so has He none in his sadness. He would have you to be happy, but not in your way. The time and the manner He reserves in His own power. Happiness is not a thing inherited by the rich alone—the poorest may better have it; nor is it only for them that have many and dear friends about them—the loneliest may have it in a deeper though a severer measure; for happiness is an inward boon: it is shed abroad secretly in the heart by the love of Christ. They that have chosen Him above all others, have chosen well. He is enough, though they hardly feel it; though their affections crave about, like a flickering flame, for nearer and palpable things. Therefore let us choose boldly. Some choice you must have. Even the most wavering have a preference, which to them is equal to a choice. A thousand other forms beckon to us with promises

[1] Psalm xxxvii. 4.

of rest; but only He can give it. Choose rather to sit at His feet than to be at ease, or rich, or high, or prosperous, or full of bright earthly hopes. Yea, choose rather to sit in loneliness before Him, than to dwell in the happiest throng, where He holds the second place. Life is very short; and the world to come already dawns upon us. Brethren, choose boldly a life devoted to Christ. Be His only. Hear the Church saying, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His." The world holds you but by a thread; you may snap it in twain, and in the settled though hidden purpose of your soul take on you His yoke for ever.

And having chosen boldly, make good your choice with perseverance. Many a time your heart will hanker for what it once promised itself to possess. Many a time you will almost fear to walk alone in the way "which is desert." It will seem strange, singular, and solitary. It may be you will have seasons of a faint will—at times all but consent to revoke your choice, and unbind your resolution. But this is not your trial only. It is common to all who devote themselves greatly. Only be stedfast, and you shall breathe more freely, and poise yourselves more steadily on the heaving flood of this unstable world. The more devoted you are to Him, the more absolutely free shall you be from all perturbations—the safer, the stronger,

the happier. True, a devoted life is a severe one. But there is a severity in the perfection of bliss. It is severe because perfect, as God is awful in His perfection. Fear not to give up what the world counts dearest, that you may wear His yoke in secret. Live in lowly well-doing; in works of alms and prayer, of charity and spiritual mercy. Better to be so under a vow to Him, than to be free to choose this world's alluring hopes. Brethren, are you happy now? If not, why not? Why, but because you are hankering after something on a lower level of devotion. Something below Christ is your aim in life. You are restless because you have not reached it; or now that you have it in your hands, you find it cannot satisfy your heart.

"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and cumbered about many things. But one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."[1]

[1] Luke x. 41, 42.

SERMON IX.

THE DANGER OF MISTAKING KNOWLEDGE FOR OBEDIENCE.

St. James i. 22, 23, 24.

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was."

St. James is here warning the great body of the Church against a very common and subtle temptation; that is, the substituting of Christian knowledge for Christian obedience.

The Gospel had in it such an overwhelming power of speculative and moral truth, as to subdue a mixed multitude of men to a sort of professed allegiance to the mysteries of God. It came into the world as a veiled light of transcendent brightness, revealing the mystery of the Godhead, and the condition of mankind; resolving the doubts of the wise, and unravelling the perplexities of the unlearned; it laid open the secrets of the unseen

world, and put a continuous meaning into the great movements of the world we see; it made man to know and to feel that he is a fallen and sinful being, and that God, of His great love, has pledged to him the forgiveness of his sins. And thus, as it declared the character of God, and the standing of man before Him, and the mysteries of life and death, and hell and heaven, it silenced the disputations of contending schools, and won men to itself by the yearnings of their hearts, and the convictions of their understanding, and the judgments of conscience, and a miraculous consent of will; it held up each man to himself, as in a mirror of supernatural truth, revealing depths of evil which men knew not before: and thus there was gathered round the Gospel a mixed and numberless multitude of all kinds and character of life, from the holiest to the least purified, from the man who is sanctified beyond the measure of his knowledge, to the man whose knowledge was as full as his life was unholy.

Now this is the sin and the danger against which St. James warns them; against the sin, that is, of having knowledge without obedience, and the danger of hearing without doing the word of God. He tells them that all such knowledge is in vain, nay worse than in vain. And this is what we will more fully consider.

1. In the first place, then, remember that this

knowledge without obedience ends in nothing. It is, as St. James says, like a man who looks at his own face in a glass. For the time he has the clearest perception of his own countenance. Every line and feature, even the lightest expression, is visible, and, by the mysteriously retentive power of the mind, he holds it for a while in what we call the mind's eye; but when he has gone his way, the whole image fades, and the vividness of other objects overpowers it, so that he becomes habitually more familiar with the aspect of all other things than with his own natural face. Nothing can better express shallowness and fleetingness of knowledge without obedience. For the time it is vivid and exact; but it passes off in nothing—no resolution recorded in the conscience, or, if recorded, none maintained; no change of life, nothing done, or left undone, for the sake of the truth which is shadowed out in the understanding. And this is the folly which our Lord rebukes in the parable of the man that built his house upon the sand. He was not comparing the solidity of doctrinal foundations; but exhibiting the folly and disappointment of knowledge without obedience. "Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew,

and beat upon that house; and it fell, and great was the fall of it."[1]

2. But it must also be considered that knowing without obeying is worse than in vain. It inflicts a deep and lasting injury upon the powers of our spiritual nature. Even in the hardest of men, a knowledge of Christianity produces an effect upon the conscience and the heart. It excites in a man certain convictions and emotions, and these are mysterious gifts of God; they are the first movements of the moral powers that are within us, the first impulses to set us in motion towards God. It is by these inward strivings that knowledge brings a man to repentance and to eternal life. But they are only movements and impulses—means to a further end, and good in so far as they attain that end. In their own nature they are most transitory: they can be prolonged only by issuing in obedience, and thereby settling into principle; or, if they issue in nothing, by keeping up a perpetual succession of the same excitements. Now here is the peril of habitually listening to truths which we habitually disobey. Every time we hear them, they goad the conscience, and stir the heart; but every time with a lessened force, and, as it were, with a blunter edge;—not, indeed, that they can lose aught of their power and keenness, but because

[1] St. Matthew vii. 26, 27.

the often-excited mind grows languid and dull; its senses, often acted on, are deadened; the passive powers of the mind wear out, as the ear seems to lose all hearing of familiar sounds, or as a pampered palate is vitiated and its functions destroyed. So is it with men who from their baptism have been familiar with the mysteries of Christ. In childhood, boyhood, manhood, the same sounds of warning, and promise, and persuasion, the same hopes and fears, have fallen on a heedless ear, and a still more heedless heart: they have lost their power over the man; he has acquired a settled habit of hearing without doing. The whole power of habit — that strange mockery of nature — has reinforced his original reluctance to obey; and long familiarity with truth makes it all the harder to recognise,—as the faces of those we most intimately know are often less distinct in our memory than those we have seen but seldom, and therefore noted all the more exactly.

3. But there is a yet further danger still; for knowledge without obedience is an arch-deceiver of mankind. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"—*deceiving*, i. e. as if you were any the nearer heaven for a cold, barren consciousness that the Gospel is the word of God, or a clear intellectual perception of its several doctrines. Nay, it deceives a man into the belief that he really

is what he so clearly knows he ought to be; that he is really moving onward in the path which he so clearly knows he must walk in, if he would inherit the kingdom of God. It is a wonderful imposture men pass upon themselves. One would think, the clearer a man's knowledge of what he ought to do and be, the clearer would be his perception of the vast moral distance between that high standard and his actual state. But, no. The heart is a busy mocker of the conscience: it borrows of the understanding and of the imagination visions and shadows of eternal truth, and it flatters the conscience into a pleasant belief that such are its own spontaneous dictates and intentions; it cheats it into appropriating, as its own moral character, the mere shadows which lie on the surface of the intellect. And from this comes the ready and exact profession of religion which is often found in the mouth even of irreligious men: they know so well what a holy character ought to be, that they are able exactly to describe it. They can sketch out all its outline, and fill in its detail, and colour it, by what we should call the merely imaginative or graphic powers of the mind. And as the most undisguised fictions often move the lower feelings of the mind as deeply as truth itself, emotions come in to help the cheat, and a man really kindles at his own vivid descriptions: but he deceives others less than

he deceives himself. When he speaks of the love of God, or the passion of Christ, or the heavenly Jerusalem, or the crowns of martyrs and the holiness of saints, and the happiness of a Christian life, the topics grow upon him, and he moves himself, much as he might by some cunning tale, and his emotions flatter him into the belief that he is a man of religious feelings, and then how can he doubt that his heart is religious too? So we mock ourselves, and Satan ensnares us. So we draw a haze, as it were, over the clear eye of the conscience, by the warmth of kindled emotions; and the outlines of our slighted knowledge are verily taken for the realities of a holy life. This will be found to be the true key of many characters. We see men who know every thing a Christian has need to know to his soul's health, and yet are as little like Christians in their daily habit of life, as if they had never reached beyond the moral philosophy of heathen schools. But nothing would make them believe it;—they have deceived their own selves. Again; there are men who can never speak of religious truth without emotion, and sometimes not without tears; and yet, though their knowledge has so much of fervour as to make them weep, it has not power enough to make them deny a lust. Aye, brethren, it will be found with most of us, that we verily believe ourselves to be better than we are. It is a pleasant

flattery, and a quiet self-indulgence, which winds itself through our minds, and soothes them when we are ill at ease. We take the full measure of what we do well; we wink at what we do amiss. We comfort ourselves that we *know* better, and shall therefore do better another time. We fall back on our better knowledge, as a makeweight against our worse practice, and as a pledge of future improvement, forgetting that it aggravates our present faults.

4. And this brings us to another thought: this knowing and disobeying it is that makes so heavy and awful the responsibilities of Christians. The servant that knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes; but the servant who knew not his Lord's will, and did not make ready, shall be beaten with few stripes. It is a good plea and a prevailing, to say, "Lord, I knew not that it was Thy will." Even Saul was forgiven, albeit he persecuted the Church of God. "I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." But knowledge is a great and awful gift: it makes a man partaker of the mind of God; it communes with him of the eternal will, and reveals to him the royal law of God's kingdom. A man cannot know and slight these things without grievous and fearful sin. "It is better not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it

to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." To hold this knowledge in unrighteousness, to imprison it in the stifling hold, an impure, a proud, or a rebellious heart, is a most appalling insult against the majesty of the God of truth.

For whom were the heaviest words of doom reserved by our most patient and gentle Lord, but for those that had known Him, but not obeyed? "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes: but it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, who art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell."[1]

What was this but the recoil of truth upon the soul that had slighted its warning voice? "Whosoever shall fall upon this stone shall be broken, but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."[2]

These, then, are some of the many reasons why we have need to watch against this subtle temptation. It is a vain and hurtful thing, full of deceit and danger, to hear and not to do, to know and not to obey, the Gospel; and it is a temptation to which the Church, though exposed at all times,

[1] St. Luke x. 13-15. [2] Ibid. xx. 18.

is most especially liable when the means of knowledge are greatly multiplied, and the bonds of discipline are greatly relaxed;—and such a state of the Church is ours now, at this day. From baptism to the end of life, you have God's holy word, and the holy sacraments, the fasts and festivals, and all the sacred admonitions of things old and new, to force a knowledge of religion even upon the unwilling mind. It is as the light of heaven, which we cannot choose but see, though we may wilfully shut our eyes. In such a state, the danger of living far behind the light we have is infinitely great; especially as our rule of self-discipline is chiefly made by each man for himself, and the custom of the world, which is unchangeably at variance with the mind and Church of God, bears heavily upon us. We have to breast it and to stem it, and are perpetually carried by it away from our resolutions. But these are perilous declensions, making great havoc in the inward character of the mind.

Steadily resolve, therefore, to live up to the light you possess. There is an unity, a sameness, and a strength about a consistent character. The light you already have is great, and great therefore must be your obedience; and remember that to linger behind, or to follow afar off, is as if you should suffer your guide to outstrip you in the night-season. You hold your present knowledge on the tenure of

obedience: to disobey it, is to dim its brightness, and yet to deepen your responsibility; for we shall answer even less heavily for what we have than for what we have lost. These are fearful words: "They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."[1]

But though for the most part your knowledge is great, there are some who feel or believe their own light to be small. It is not in the greatness of the light, but in the closeness with which we follow it, that we shall find safety. "Thy word is a light unto my feet, and a lantern to my path." It is the clear dictate of conscience, enlightened by even a single ray of truth, guiding the details of a Christian's daily life, that will bring him to heaven. Therefore, once more, let us learn not to delay to follow with readiness the guidance of right knowledge. If it do but beckon or point you in the way of obedience, follow without lingering. The first sharp conviction, and the kindled emotion, and the momentary willingness which raises the eyes of obedient hearts to higher and holier paths, and dislodges even a stubborn mind from its most settled purpose,—these are sent as the first impulses to

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 10-12.

launch you in an heavenward course. Do not slight them: beware how you stifle them. They are as fleeting as the memory of a reflected image. It may be you have them now: if lost, it may be you shall have them never again.

SERMON X.

OBEDIENCE THE ONLY REALITY.

1 John ii. 17.

"The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

It may seem perhaps a hard saying, that in this majestic and dazzling world there is only one imperishable reality, and that, a thing most hidden and despised—I mean, a will obedient to the will of God. Yet nothing is more certain. It is plain that nothing is truly real which is not eternal. In a certain sense, all things, the most shadowy and fleeting,—the frosts, and dews, and mists of heaven,—are real; every light which falls from the upper air, every reflection of its brightness towards heaven again, is a reality. It is a creature of God; and is here in His world, fulfilling His will. But these things we are wont to take as symbols and parables of unreality, and that because they are changeful and transitory. It is clear, then, that when we speak of realities, we mean things that

have in them the germ of an abiding life. Things which pass away at last, how long soever they may seem to tarry with us, we call forms and appearances. They have no intrinsic being: for a time they are, and then they are not. Their very being was an accident; they were shadows of a reality, cast for a time into the world, and then withdrawn. In strictness of speech, we can call nothing real which is not eternal. Now it is in this sense that I have said, the only reality in the world is a will obedient to the will of God: and this we will consider more at large.

1. First of all, it is plain that the only reality in this visible world is man. "The earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burned up."[1] Whatsoever may lie hid in these awful words, it is clear that they declare this world to be transitory, and its end determined. Of all things that have life without a reasonable soul, we know no more than that they perish. All visible things are ever changing; material forms passing into new combinations, shifting their sameness with their shapes: all things around us, and above us, and beneath, are full of change; they heave, and mingle, and resolve, and pass off by some mysterious law of intercommunication, and by that law declare that they are not eternal. In like manner, all the

[1] 2 St. Pet. iii. 10.

works of men, all the arts of life, are no more than the impressions and characters left by the spirit of man, while subject to the conditions of an earthly state. Kingdoms, and polities, and laws, and armies, and mechanical powers, and the achievements of wisdom, and wit, and might, and the infinite maze of human action, from the beginning to the ending of the world's history,—what are they all, under the providence of God, but so many fleeting and broken shadows, cast by the ever-varying postures of man's restless spirit? They are all in time and of time, and with time shall pass away, save only their accumulated results, of which we shall have to speak hereafter. Such, for instance, were the empires of Nimrod and Nebuchadnezzar, of Persia and Greece: or let us take, as an example, the great empire of Rome. For well nigh two thousand years what a sleepless movement of human life swarmed round that wonderful centre of the world! how it expanded itself from a point to be the girdle of the whole earth! how that same teeming power of thought and action wrought itself inwardly into a wondrous polity of ordered and civilised life, and outwardly, through fleets and legions, into an irresistible force, breaking in pieces, and fusing, and recasting the world into its own mould! And so it wrought on from century to century, as if it would never wax old; and men, from

this, were beguiled to call it the Eternal City. And it bid fair to be coeval with the world. And yet of all that majestic phenomenon what shall remain, when the fashion of this world hath passed away, but the isolated individual souls which in this world were lost in its mighty life? The whole is gone by, like a stately and stupendous pageant, and its mighty frame resolved again into its original dust. Nothing survives but the mass of human life; and that not blended as before, but each one as several and apart as if none lived before God but he only. And so of all the course and history of the world; all is either past or passing away; nothing remains but the record of human life in the book of the Eternal, and the stream of undying spirits which is ever issuing from among us into the world unseen. And thus it is that all that is real in the world is ever passing out of it; tarrying for a while in the midst of shadows and reflections, and then, as it were, melting out of sight.

2. Again; as the only reality in the world is man, so the only reality in man is his spiritual life. By this I do not exclude his animal being, but expressly include it, as the less is included in the greater. In like manner as, when we speak of a spiritual body, we mean not a spirit only, but a body under the conditions of the spirit; so by the spiritual life is meant the living man made new by

the power of the Holy Ghost. Before his regeneration through the Spirit, he was dead in the flesh; he was a part of this dying world, which is ever passing away; unknown changes awaited him; and after the last visible change, there was no destiny revealed. We know not all that the doom, "Thou shalt surely die," may mean in the state of the dead. But the regenerate man is translated from death to life; he is made partaker of immortality, and is again eternal. I am speaking, then, of that spiritual life which is in all that are born again; and I say that this alone is intrinsically eternal, forasmuch as it is an awful gift of the Divine Presence, and is the one only, and true, and abiding reality.

Now the truth of this will be made to appear, if we consider the following points. First, that of what is called the life of man—that is, of his living acts and energies — the greatest part is altogether separable from his spiritual life, and is therefore altogether transient and perishing: such, for instance, as all his endless, ever-returning toil for the sustentation of this bodily life; all the homage which we are compelled to pay to the conditions of our earthly state, and the wants of our fallen manhood. It matters not what is the particular form of all this toiling: whether a man be a tiller of the earth, or a keeper of flocks, or a mer-

chant, or a pleader, or an orator, or a maker of laws, he is laboriously serving the necessities of our earthly condition; and though a faithful man may turn any or all of these callings into a service of spiritual obedience, yet they may be, each one, and are, for the most part, all of them, fulfilled without a thought of the inner life, by the almost mechanical powers of the reason and the will. Now all this, which makes up the greatest part of the life of most men, is little better than mere contact with this perishing world. Except when incorporated with the spiritual life, it has no admixture of permanence, and, in the sense we have defined, of reality. It is a mere shadow, transient and fleeting. All the sweat of the brow, all the bold enterprises, all the skilful address, all the kindling oratory, all the science of government, and all the toil by which these were earned, and all the wealth or greatness by which they are waited on,—where are they all when a man comes to die, or when he must fall down before God to confess a sin? They are as utterly abolished as if they were all acted in a masque, or done in a former life. How strangely, how awfully external and unreal do all these things appear, when we are on our knees beneath the Eternal Eye!

And so, again, to take another instance: even that which seems above all to enter into the very

deep of our spiritual life,—I mean the cultivation of mind, refinement, the excitement of intellectual powers, the acquirement of learning and science, which things seem to us to give the distinguishing mould and cast to the characters of men,—how altogether separable are these things also from the spiritual being! They are often found in men of the unholiest passions. The railing scoffer, the most impure sensualist, the man in whom the spiritual life seems absolutely quenched, oftentimes far more largely possesses these manifold gifts of our intellectual nature than the most devoted of God's servants. They are but partial developments of his reasonable life; altogether unsanctified; in no way related to the spiritual being; earthly, and therefore but shadows of the eternal gifts of the hallowed and illuminated reason. Now most men of learning and self-cultivation, if they would but look keenly and truly into themselves, would be awe-struck to see how little unity there is between their intellectual and their spiritual powers; how unreal is all they are living in, and, unless taken up into the spiritual life, and thereby consecrated, how hollow and perishable is all the toil and fret of their daily labour. If any proof of this were wanting, we need only see such men in times of sorrow, or fear, or anxiety, or pain—above all, in a season of death. It seems then as if all but a

tithe of their whole being were suddenly abolished: all their powers, and energies, and acquirements, are as remote and alien from their present needs, as so many broad acres, or stately houses, or costly retinues. They all alike seem splendid unrealities, which have done little more than dazzle and draw off the eyes of the inner spirit from that which alone is eternal.

And, besides this, remember that nothing of all we have and are in this world, save only our spiritual life, and that which is impressed upon it and blended with it, shall we carry into the world unseen. Even as we said of this world's entangled history, so is it of the life of each several man. Though all things shall be remembered in the judgment, and though all that he has ever done or spoken shall have left some stamp for good or ill upon his immortal spirit, yet what a putting off of this lower life shall there be at that day! "Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire."[1] Of all the unnumbered goings on of this busy life, of

[1] 1 Cor. iii. 13, 14, 15.

all its deeds, and achievements, and possessions, how small a remainder shall be found after that fiery trial has done its work! how shall the "wood, hay, and stubble," and all the unrealities of act, and word, and thought, and self-persuasion, and empty imagination, and conventional formalities, and personal observances, be burned up; and nothing abide that searching test but the powers of our spiritual life! And of all the regenerate to whom that high gift was given, none shall pass through that piercing trial into God's kingdom but only they in whom there shall be found a will obedient to the will of God. They that have held a regenerate nature in disobedience are condemned already with the world, and must perish with the world—"for the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

From what has been said, let this one broad inference suffice, that the aim of our life ought to be to partake of this eternal obedience. Nothing else is worth our living for. We have been each one of us born again. Obedient or disobedient, we must be real or unreal, imperishable or perishing.

And therefore our first care must needs be, to watch against whatsoever may turn the obedience of our will away from God. Of the commission of actual sin I need say nothing; I am speaking only of those in whom the regenerate will so far prevails

as to make them, in the main, obey the will of God. The temptations which keep alive the disobedience of the will are such as these: strong desires after any aim in life, worldly foresight, long-drawn schemes of action, over-carefulness in the work of our calling, the indulgence of choosing and wishing for the future, a soft life, love of ease, and the like: now all these strengthen the action of our own will, and make us impatient of a cross. If events fall out otherwise than we desire, we grow restless and repining; or if we do not carry ourselves in open variance to the will of God, we submit with sullenness and a chafing heart. All this is because we have willed things in some other way; we have been forecasting, and taking counsel of our own wishes, and measuring things by their supposed bearing upon ourselves; and our will has become so imperious in its choice, that we forget the sovereignty of God in His own world. Now, we are all tempted to this fault by nature; and even after we have so far yielded ourselves as to obey His laws in the main tenour of our life, there lingers behind a strong root of spiritual disobedience in the heart; and we are ever exciting and stimulating it in secret. Our calling in life presents a thousand subtle provocations to awaken and sustain the independent life of our will. And this explains our bitter disappointments, immoderate griefs, irritable tempers, jealous

feelings. We have been imposing laws on the course of our destinies, taking the rule of God's kingdom out of His hands, and surrounding ourselves with an unreal world of hopes, and fears, and choices, and yearnings of our own; and God has touched it with His hand, and it has started asunder and crumbled away. These states of our interior life are very insidious. There is perhaps hardly any man who is so wholly free from them, as to be altogether real and simple. For the most part, men choose, in thought, what they like best, and then will that it should come to pass, and then persuade themselves that it is to be so, and live in the persuasion, and "walk in a vain shadow, and disquiet themselves in vain." They are out of harmony with the movement of the Divine will, and become hollow and visionary. And that, too, in the most commonplace manner of life. The most unimaginative, unpoetical matter-of-fact men are often just as unreal as the most heated and romantic—only in another way; as, for instance, they wear out a whole life with a concentration of every thought which is awful and saddening, in straining after some object —such as high place, or great wealth, or hereditary name, which for them is as remote and unreal as the philosopher's stone, or the elixir of life. In truth, whatsoever lies on either side of the lines, or beyond the limits, which the will of God has

drawn about our lot in this world, is for us as if it did not exist; and all our thoughts, aims, hankerings, and toil after it, are mere unrealities, and must come to nothing. Most certain it is, that in every man there will be found a large admixture of this labour in vain; and perhaps the largest measure of our earnestness, and energy, and of the powers of life, are simply thrown away. Now, the first check upon this is, to understand what God wills us to be; and then to abandon every thing else, as if it did not so much as exist in the world. What we *are*, is a revelation of His will towards us. Our lot is a reality; the works of our calling are real, so long as they are done as a service of obedience. Within these bounds there is nothing which does not bear upon eternity.

And this teaches us that we must do more than only watch against the allurements of our own will. Obedience to the will of God is a work of direct and simple consciousness. It is to be wrought in us by its own self-confirming power. It is by doing the will of God; by recognising it in all the changes of life; by reading in the course of this troubled world the expression of the Divine mind; by bowing ourselves down before it, under whatsoever guise it may reveal itself; by yielding ourselves in gladness of mind both to do and suffer it, counting it a holy discipline, and a loving correc-

tion of our own wilfulness, and by praying Him never to stay His hand till the mind of self be abolished from our regenerate being;—by these means it is that we are changed from the shadow of a fleeting life to the abiding realities of the eternal world, being made partakers of the will of God.

But to such a life of submission much self-discipline is needed. We cannot pass to it at once, but approach it only by the laws of a slow-advancing growth. These are days very adverse to the subjugation of the individual will. They are too external and stimulating. Even our religious life is drawn into the whirl and fever of an endless activity. But, in the service of God, there must be something behind a life of action; there must be the stationary energies of a devout spirit. Our life is too continually outward, and visible, and pent up in the throng of men. We are not enough at large and alone with God. And hence it strangely comes to pass, that we deem visible things to be real, and invisible things to be imaginary; we look upon the kingdoms of the earth, and worldly powers, and the acts of law and legislation, and the business of traders and merchants, as realities; but the Church and the priesthood, and offices of worship, and daily homage, and chants, and the offering of eucharists, and a life of contemplation, as economies and shadows.

But these alone are the shrine of an abiding life. This pompous, wise, stately world must have its day, and then be dissolved, "as a dream when one awaketh." We live in the midst of it, till it bewilders and stuns us, and we do it homage; and when we turn from it to things unseen, they are too pure and subtle for our deadened sense. There is no cure for this, but to be more alone with God. Solitude and silence are full of reality. We must draw more into our own hearts, and converse more with Him. Never do we so put off the paint and masquerade of life, as when we are alone under the Eye which seeth in secret. A man must be either very bold, or very blind, that will still keep up the play and artifice of his common bearing. I do not speak of hypocrites. There is no man that is not in some measure twofold; and that simply because there is no man who is willing to be known by his fellow-men as he knows himself, and as none knows him beside, but God only. We see only a part of each other, but God sees all. Our partial view is, if not mingled with untruth, yet misleading, because imperfect; we know only half the riddle, and we are led astray in guessing at the rest. But "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Our very helplessness makes us real. His eye holds in check the duplicities of our being;

and by the habitual repression of solitude with God, they are weakened and overcome. In the world, all day long, there is an influence playing upon us, which draws our characters to the surface, and there fixes them, leaving our hearts hollow and inactive. The works of our calling, even the most sacred offices, have a tendency to become an unconscious facility, and to sever themselves from the powers of the will. The next move is, to withdraw themselves from the region of the conscience. Now, nothing but self-discipline in secret can keep up the integrity of our whole nature. And the more difficult this is, by reason of a man's overburdened life of daily business, the more absolutely needful is it for his safety. Fearful thought! we were born alone, and alone we must die; and yet through all our life, we, as it were, flee from loneliness, which is alike the beginning and the ending of our earthly transit! Does not this seem to say, that we are never at ease but when we can lose the consciousness of what we are, in the noise and show of the world? All that we can do, when we find ourselves grown artificial and excited, is to go apart, where none but God sees us, and fall down as dust and nothingness before Him, and plead with Him against ourselves, and pray Him to abolish in us all that is not real and abiding.

We have the more need of this secret discipline

of self, because we have few aids and helps of a secondary sort. They are not many who have the blessing of being subject to any proximate superior; to any rule out of themselves, by which the detail of their life is ordered. More is thereby thrown upon the energy of the individual will. The need of some imposed discipline, which shall bear upon the actings of our inner nature, is wonderfully attested by the yearnings of thoughtful men at this time: on every side we hear them painfully striving to free themselves from the bondage of unmeaning and artificial habits, and to find some basis on which they may rest the full weight of their living powers. This has grown upon them, more and more, ever since the current of the world turned aside from the path of the Catholic Church. The more energetic, dominant, and mighty, the more learned, toilsome, and self-trusting it has become, the more hollow is it and untrue. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof." It is confounded at its own perpetual changes: it sees that none of its schemes abide; that it daily grows more weary of toiling, and more transient in its toils. And why, but because it has divorced itself from the Church of the living God, and is resolving again into the incoherencies of its fallen state? All men are conscious of this: even they that cannot explain the cause. They feel, when they are busied in the world, that

there is something empty, something which mocks and wearies them: they feel that the leaning of their worldly toil is away from God; that they are moving in another direction; that their returns to Him are by a sensible effort, and, as it were, against a stream. They feel, too, that their daily life is a hinderance to a life of devotion. It is distracting and importunate; it exacts too much service, and repays with a perpetual weariness. All the day long they are conscious that they have fallen under the dominion of a power which is not at one with God. They crave after something through which they may submit themselves to the realities of the eternal world. And for this end was the visible Church ordained. To meet the yearnings of our baffled hearts, it stands in the earth as a symbol of the Everlasting; under the veil of its material sacraments are the powers of an endless life; its unity and its order are the expressions of heavenly things; its worship, of an eternal homage. Blessed are they that dwell within its hallowed precinct, shielded from the lures and spells of the world, living in plainness, even in poverty; hid from the gaze of men, in solitude and silence walking with God.

SERMON XI.

THE LIFE OF CHRIST THE ONLY TRUE IDEA OF SELF-DEVOTION.

PHILIPPIANS ii. 21.

"All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."

THERE is something peculiarly touching in the saddened tone of these few words, in which St. Paul glances at the slackness of his fellow-labourers. It must have been a cross almost too heavy to bear without complaining, when from his prison-house at Rome he saw his brethren in Christ drawing off, one by one, from the hardness of their Master's service. It must have been a provocation almost beyond endurance to see, day by day, tokens of a faint heart and a selfish purpose coming out in the words and acts of those on whom he most depended. It added to his bondage the worst form of desolation—the loneliness of a high, unbroken spirit in the throng of shrinking and inconstant men. He had before now seen, in faithless and fearful Christians, open apostacy and undisguised

abandonment of Christ and His Gospel. But keenly as that must have entered into his soul, he had in this to endure a still sharper trial. It was this that pierced him to the quick: for they of whom he here writes were not open apostates. They were not men who fell from the body of the Church, and were severed wholly from his fellowship; but men openly professing faith in Christ, keeping up with him the same outward relation as partakers in the same labour of love, and yet failing him in the moment of danger, in the very pinch of a severe trial. Such, for instance, was Demas; who is often, but by mistake, supposed to have been an apostate from the faith: he did not renounce his Christianity, but fell back from the hardships of an apostle's life. "Demas hath forsaken"—not Christ nor the Gospel —but "me, having loved this present world."[1] He had no like zeal or self-devotion with St. Paul: they were unequally yoked together. Demas was hurried, beyond his own choice, into dangers and toils; he found St. Paul a perilous companion; he loved the Gospel, but not less he loved his own life and ease; and he fell back, from an apostle's standing, to be an ordinary Christian.

This is probably a fair example of what St. Paul intended, when he told the Philippians, that he must needs detach Timothy, and send him unto

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 10.

them; for "I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your state: for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." We see, then, what he would express. It was the state of men in whom the first fervours of conversion had subsided. In an hour of ready zeal, they had forsaken all, and undertaken an apostle's work. It may be they were, for a long season, forward and stedfast, foregoing much, and enduring more; but at the last they grew weary of the monotonous hardship of preaching and suffering. And first, it may be, they began to spare themselves, and to use trifling evasions, or to keep unseasonable silence, and secretly to long for their discharge from a service now grown irksome. And this hidden disloyalty of the heart shewed itself in low views of what was possible in Christ's service, and in overrating of difficulties, in discouraging views, in untimely objections, and in expostulations at the very moment of action. In some of these ways they betrayed the disappointing truth, that self-regard had mastered them, and that love of self outweighed their love of Christ. There was a counter-attraction overcoming the constraining love of their Lord. This, then, is the heart-sin of which St. Paul writes: it is a refined selfishness, so plausibly defended, so strongly entrenched in reasonable pleadings, as to leave him no more to do, than to

expostulate and to be silent; to give them a fair opening to do high service for their Master, and then to pass them by, and choose some worthier and bolder man.

And here we see one of the worst antagonists of the Church of Christ,—a fair profession of Christianity with a predominant regard of self. Whatsoever wounds in the history of the Church may not be traced to the sword of persecution, or the grosser forms of sin, will be found to come from the overmastering powers of self-regard. Every body will admit that this is true, at the first hearing; but few really know the subtle insinuations and the full extent of this spiritual disease.

Now the peculiar danger of this fault may be seen by the following remarks:—

1. It may consist with all that the Church requires of her people as a condition to communion in her fullest privileges. A man may be under the dominion of this paralysing fault, and yet really live in many ways a Christian life. A man may live a pure life, and blameless; he may be benevolent, and do many works of charity; he may be very systematic in his religious duties; and have no little zeal in works of a directly religious character; and yet, after all, it shall be not more true of Demas than of such a man, that he loves this present world, that he habitually and deliberately

seeks his "own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's." For all the tokens of Christian life that I have spoken of, fall within the limit at which a man's self-regard is put on trial. There is a large field of common-place Christian duty, in which a man may toil without so much as ever once becoming aware that there is an irreconcilable variance between a governing regard to his own interests, and a faithful discharge of Christ's service; that there is a clashing point, where one or other must give way. A very large part of Christianity is directly favourable to a man's worldly interests:—all that goes to the establishing of a fair reputation, and to the conciliation of good will, is full of solid advantage; self-regard and self-respect urgently prescribe to a man such a habit of life as shall be in accordance with the outward example of Christ's true servants.

Nay, even more, a man's own happiness is advanced by a Christian temper of mind; and thus far the service of Christ is oftentimes one of the chiefest and most refined means of cherishing himself.

Habits of devotional thought, and the hopes of an inheritance in light, kindle and sustain his interior life and peace; and in this way he makes the service of Christ minister directly to the self-regard which governs all his actions. Like educa-

tion, or intellectual excitement, and other refined energies of the reason and moral habit, it becomes distinctly subservient to his predominant aim.

2. But, on the other hand, this habit of mind, while it satisfies the external demands of the Church, and ministers to the inward happiness of the mind, absolutely extinguishes all that ever produced any great work in Christ's service. It stunts the whole spirit at the standard of self; and makes all a man's thoughts and powers minister and submit themselves to his own aim and purpose. It makes a man live in himself and for himself, and bound himself about by his own horizon. He will be devoted and earnest just so far as he may without trenching upon the comfort of his own life. He will pray, and fast, and give alms, and witness for the truth, just so far, and just so long, as shall involve him in no austerity, or weariness, or self-denial, or loss of popularity. All that goes beyond this measure will be to him excessive, unnecessary, gratuitous; the boundaries of his own practice are fixed, he believes, at the ultimate point, and so become absolute; the aims which rise above or lie beyond his practice are visionary and impossible. Most desirable, he will admit — and would to God we lived in days when they could be accomplished — but he deliberately thinks that times are changed; and what our fathers might reasonably do, we may

as reasonably forbear. They did great works, bore great self-denials, made great sacrifices; but then it was the custom of their day—society did not require of them many things which it exacts of us. And who would set himself against society? Who would affect strangeness and singularity? Who would live below his means in life, or not keep pace with others of his own rank and standing? —No, brethren, not to evangelize mankind, would such a man offend the fastidious feelings of society, or break the self-constituted proprieties of a perishing world; no, not for an Apostle's crown, nor for the love of Christ his Lord, would such a man say to himself, No change of times, customs, or conventional rule, can absolve me from the unchangeable law of self-devotion. No such man would say this, and act upon it. He stands well with the world; he is not censured by the Church;—what more is necessary? Surely for him it must be gratuitous and ostentatious to take a rule and standard of his own above other men. Besides, it would offend them; it would be a rebuke to them; it would alienate them from him, and neutralise his influence for good: a man forfeits the effect of good example by going too far. — So men tamper with the edge of conscience, and turn its keenness. Even they that have higher yearnings, and pulses that beat for nobler deeds, sink back acquiescingly

under the burdensome traditions of our easy life. Little by little their sympathies with high aspiring minds are blunted; every thing that goes beyond their own habit is over-much; every thing that would by consequence break in upon some part of their blameless easy course is impossible. Oh, none are so hard to rouse to great works of faith as they. If we should plead with a Magdalene out of whom have been cast seven devils, or a Peter that hath thrice denied his Lord, or a Paul who hath made havoc of the Church,—there is material for a substantive and vivid character, there is energy for a life above the world. Conformed to the likeness of their Lord, the examples of all living men are no more to them than the gaudy shifting clouds of an evening sky; moving along the path of the cross, all the soft and silken customs of life are as threads of idle gossamer. There is about them a moral weight, and an onward force, and a clear definite outline of character, before which every thing gives way. They hurry all before them, as by the spell of absolute dominion. They have about them a dignity borrowed from the grandeur of the end for which they live. Poverty and plainness, solitude and a self-denying life, in them no man dares despise; nay, all men feel that these harder features are more in keeping with the loftiness of

their moral choice, than the nice proprieties or the effeminate exactness of the world.

And yet, is it not most true that such characters as these we deem rather to be gazed after than followed; as objects rather to admire than to imitate? Do we not deal with each other, ay, and with our own consciences, as if the devotion of the Apostles were as miraculous as the casting out of devils? Do we not look along the lines of holy men, who, through the darkest ages of the Church, shine with unearthly splendour, and speak of them as we do of strange fires which move on no discoverable laws; wild and eccentric lights, of most commanding grandeur, but perilous to follow? And what do we thereby confess, but that the Divine laws, which ordered that spiritual world, are but feebly felt and faintly understood by us; that the powers of some lower system have absorbed us in their circuits; and that we are hurried along by some inferior forces, which bear us visibly away from their luminous paths and destinies, we know not whither, nor why?

And yet the reason is not mysterious. We need call up no seer to unravel the secret. It is simply this, "all seek their own, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's."

1. First of all; few of us have any clear view of

Christ's service projected before our minds, to which all our living powers are bent. There is a want of external reality in all our views of religion. They are self-contemplative and limited. We do not look out of ourselves to Him. The secret of that stupendous self-devotion which the saints of Christ in all ages have manifested in the world is simply this: they set up the life of Christ their Lord before them. They believed it to be the only spiritual reality the world ever saw, and that all other patterns of life were cheats and shadows; from it they drew all maxims and rules of living; by it they tried all customs of mankind; what combined with it, they held fast; what clashed with it, they trampled under foot; they gazed upon it, and grew towards it; they fell down before it, and worshipped it; and when they arose, and turned from it upon the world, they knew not that they reflected its borrowed glory. They knew not why men followed them, and yet shrunk from them; why they resisted them, and yet gave way before them; and they were troubled, and went and hid themselves, and did their works in secret, and bade no man speak of them; and yet their words and deeds came abroad, and kindled others to a like devotion.

This, then, is the main reason why in these days we see so few great examples of bold and masculine devotion. Men have lost sight of the living

type of self-sacrifice, and with that type they have lost their energy of will. Lower views insure lesser powers.

2. And the natural consequence of this must be, that all the customs of life, the habits of the world, the particular traditions of family and individual character, and all the current maxims and unwritten laws of society, maintain so tyrannous a hold even over good minds (for of such only, not of the coarsely selfish, or the grossly self-indulgent, am I speaking), that high and generous tempers are chilled into inaction, and so miserably depressed, as to move along the dreary level of an over-circumspect and self-regarding life. They are predestined by the usurping fatality of the world to grow rich, or to make a family, or to perpetuate a fortune, or to spend an income ostentatiously, or to maintain the laborious courtesies of life; they are in a bondage from which there is no escape. Oh, what high spirits are dwarfed, what heavenly aspirations beaten back to earth, what deep yearnings of love are crushed and stifled, for want of the free air of heaven, and the bold action of a devoted life! They are forced to seek their own, until a refined selfishness returns upon their regenerate nature with all the tainting, stupifying power of its original sin. And they grow over-prudent and wary, shrinking within the narrowest lines, always on the safer

side, hazarding nothing, measuring by the scale of their own feebleness what is possible to be done for Christ in His own kingdom. And thus the glow of early religion is chilled down into the torpor of after-life: and hence come isolating forms of opinion and practice, even in religion; and over-development of peculiarities in the individual character, and the obscuration of that common type of Christian life which knits men insensibly in one. Hence, too, arise schisms of sympathy within the Church; and disappointing slackness, even in good men; jealousy of private rights in things most sacred; the reappearance of unequal ranks, in the very sanctuary of God; irregular and conflicting schemes of well-doing, even when we do our best; decline of missionary zeal, of eucharistical charity; and, as a consequence of all this, the contraction and palsy of the Church itself. Oh, that we did but know the freedom and the happiness of a life above the world! They whose names are splendid with the most hallowed light have in their day moved along all paths of life. Among the saints of Christendom are men of toil and trade, the craftsman, and the merchant, the pleader, the man of letters, orators, lawgivers, warriors and leaders of mighty hosts, princes, and queens, and emperors. In all ranks, and all orbits of the civil state, men mortified in soul, as the holy Paul, have lived unto Christ their

Lord. None so fulfilled the offices and tasks of life as they — because they were above them all. They descended to them, and discharged them with an ease and grace which nothing but an absolute extinction of self can give. None so wise, so courteous, so beloved as they; none richer nor more prosperous; none more faithful in their stewardship of this world's wealth; none bequeathed costlier heir-looms to their children's children, and that because they sought not their own, but the things that were Jesus Christ's. Brethren, here is the key of this great spiritual parable: ask of God the mind of Jesus Christ; for "He pleased not Himself." Learn to do, to give up, to give away, as He did. Live as men whose "life is hid with Christ in God." "Let your conversation be in heaven." Try every thing, measure every thing, check every thing, by the governing law of Christ's example. Seek first what is His; and He will take care for what is your own.

SERMON XII.

THE REWARDS OF THE NEW CREATION.

St. Matthew xix. 27, 28, 29.

"Then answered Peter and said unto Him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall inherit everlasting life."

In these words we have a most gracious promise of the full and sure reward with which our Lord Jesus Christ will overpay all His true servants in the kingdom of the resurrection. They were drawn from Him by the shrinking back of the rich young man who had sought to enter into the kingdom of God. He had so lived from his youth up as to be not far from it; but in the last deciding trial he was found wanting. One thing he lacked, and that one thing was in what we should call his

characteristic failing: he was rich, and he could not forsake all for Christ. He wanted nerve and faith enough to strike through the last bond which bound down his soul to earth; and this one thing wanting lost him all things. St. Peter then, who was standing by, and had heard and seen what had passed, took occasion to say, "Lo, we have left all and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?" And our Lord promised a repayment, an over-payment, an hundred-fold; and, as we read in St. Mark, He said, "now in *this* time;"[1] and in St. Luke, "in this *present* time, and in the world to come everlasting life."[2]

First, then, our Lord meant that He would repay them for all things they gave up for His sake, in this world, after His resurrection. They who followed Him had been gathered out from Galilee and Judea, from Bethsaida and Jerusalem, one by one; and each several one had to make the same deliberate act of self-renunciation. They had to forsake all that earth holds dearest; not traffic, and gain, and ease alone, but the love of friends, and all that we gather together in our thoughts of home. All that was once fullest of life became to them as dead; all in the life of which they were wont to live was thenceforth as if it had never been: their choice of Christ for

[1] St. Mark x. 30. [2] St. Luke xviii. 30.

their Lord, and His kingdom for their portion, was a sharp and severing vow, which left them solitary in the throng of men who were friends before.

Such they made themselves for His sake before He suffered, and therefore He pledged His truth to them, that they should find again what they had lost for His service, after He was risen from the dead. And He made them the patriarchs of the "Israel of God;" they were made pastors and princes, fathers and bishops, ruling, from their apostolic thrones, the twelve mystical tribes of God's elect. The whole Church was their ghostly family: they had sons, and brethren, and sisters, in all lands. All the whole earth was their home. All things were theirs, for "they had all things common." So was His word fulfilled in the communion of saints. Even in this present time it was fulfilled, albeit with persecution: even when the powers of hell hung heaviest upon them, and shut them in on every side, what man can tell the hidden joy, the unutterable gladness, of His holy Church? When most likened in suffering to the passion of their Lord, there was, ever deep and full, a river of holy calm, making glad the city of God. And so unto this day, His most sure promise has had a like fulfilment. Never any man forsook any thing for his Master's sake, but even in this life he hath found it in some unlooked-for compensation; not, it may

be, alike in kind, but full of as deep a joy. The manifold wisdom of His eternal love attempers to His servants all their earthly being. Though their lot be most various, and most adverse to their self-choosing hopes, though it be ever changing, yet in every change it brings out some unknown and larger outline of ever-new reward for all they have forsaken in His service.

But there is yet a further and deeper fulfilment of this promise still to come.

Our Lord intended also, that He would reward them in His kingdom, after their own resurrection; that is, when the number of the regenerate is accomplished, and the end is come, and the new heaven and new earth are revealed. "In the regeneration" or restitution of all things, when He "shall sit on the throne of His glory," then shall their reward be likewise made perfect. At that day, when the heavenly Jerusalem shall appear, and the fellowship of saints be gathered from the four winds of heaven, in that unnumbered company shall all the bonds and affections of all holy spirits be made eternal, and they shall receive an hundred-fold; brethren and sisters, and father and mother, and wife and children. What is here given in part, shall be there given in its fulness: and then shall be perfected the sympathy of all members of Christ's body mystical, perpetuating all that earth has

known of purity, and transfiguring all that is eternal with surpassing glory.

We see, then, in this promise, these great laws of Christ's kingdom. First, that there shall be a manifold reward for those who shall in any way forego any thing for Christ's sake, for all they do or suffer for His name—a reward, observe, not earned, but given; not wages, but a free gift. Once for all, let this be said: there is no connexion of idea between our *meriting* and His *rewarding*. The one is as much denied as the other is promised in holy Scripture. And, secondly, that there shall be a larger and distinguishing reward for those that have forsaken most for His service. There is promised in holy Writ, "the brightness of the firmament," and the shining "as the stars for ever and ever;" there is "the righteous man's reward," and "the prophet's reward;" there is a "right hand" and a "left hand" in His kingdom. Again: as are the orders of unseen spirits, so are the orders of saints. All are not angels, nor archangels, nor spirits of knowledge, nor spirits of love; nor have all the same degree, nor the same heavenly ministry, nor the same near approach to the Eternal throne; and so, doubtless, in the company of saints: as on earth, so in heaven there shall be patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, saints of all measures of glory, though all shall be absolutely blessed, and the principle of

order shall be doubtless this: As it is the strength and energy of love to Christ that makes one man to differ from another here in this life, so without doubt the same shall there fix the rule and order of His kingdom. As some men are now holier, so shall some be there more glorious; as some are now more like their Lord, so shall some then be nearer to Him: all shall walk in white, but some shall be of a more dazzling splendour; all shall be crowned with gold, bu some shall cast brighter rays.

Such, then, is the meaning of this promise. See, then, brethren, whether you have a share in it. What shall they have who forego nothing, or but little for His sake? Must we then, in any sense, measure our share by our self-denials? This would be a fearful issue to which to bring our confident hopes. And yet most true it is, for He Himself has spoken it: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple."[1]

Let us see then:

1. First, what we are now giving up for His sake; what we are laying up in the kingdom of the resurrection. Where does your daily life ex-

[1] St. Luke xiv. 26.

hibit any token of His cross? How should we be different, if He had never risen from the dead? Take away all that fear of reproof, or interest, or love of reputation or self-respect, or the customs of life, and the established order of your home, and all the rules and maxims by which society is refined, exact of us, and then what one thing would be found remaining? How different is the self-same act in two different men, when one man acts for some of these lower motives, and the other for the hope of the resurrection! Be not content, therefore, until you have searched out and found that the aim of your heart is single: this is what we have to ascertain. What are we casting on the water, that we may find it on the river of life? What power or effect has the kingdom of the resurrection on the works of every day; on that thronging multitude of thoughts and feelings and moral acts, which shape themselves, as the will incline, into toil, and business, and study, and pleasure, and ease, and prayer? How are these affected by the promise of our Master? What token do they bear which bespeaks a yearning hope of His exceeding great reward? Do not our hearts witness against themselves, that all these daily actings of life are chiefly done for our own gain or pleasure? It is very hard to unravel motives—to separate the interweaving of higher

and lower purposes, and to ascertain in what measure they each severally determine our will and practice. It is an ominous thing when a man's interest is found always to fall in with his religion; when the bias of his common life is exactly coincident with his better aims; when the many things he seems to do, or to leave undone, for Christ's sake, would be done or left undone also for other reasons; when the doing them or leaving them undone always turns to his advantage. I do not say, that he must therefore be necessarily acting on the inferior motive; far from it. Such is the manifold perfection of Christ's service, that it will be found to take up into itself all good reasons of moral action, and often to be, even in a worldly sense, the best, safest, and most expedient way of life. But we have need well to examine ourselves, whether the lower aims of our mind be not the more fixed and stedier, and therefore the real and dominant, though most secret, reason of our habitual line of acting.

And next, consider in what you may forsake something for His service. I do not speak of sins which if a man do not forsake, he shall surely perish; for if he break them off, they are not forgone for his Lord's sake, but for his own. An horrible dread of eternal death, and the gnawing of a selfish fear,

make men first break off their sins. But that is not self-denial; nor are sins the matter in which to shew the entireness of our devotion.

Nor, again, is it in foregoing the needless superfluities of a luxurious life. They that give up only what they care not to retain, make but poor oblations. Rich and easy people seldom reach the point of real self-denial. It is in things lawful, and, as the world deems, necessary, but, in the severe judgment of a devoted mind, tending to relax the tone of our obedience, that we may prove the singleness of our purpose. For instance, in things harmless in themselves, but inexpedient for our own sake or for others; in narrowing the freedom we might ourselves enjoy, lest any other for whom Christ died should be misled by our example; in leaving unsaid and undone many things which may tend to irritation or questioning in uninstructed or prejudiced minds. Moreover, it is not only for the safety of others, but of ourselves, that we must needs limit our use even of lawful things. He is in great peril of judgment who never foregoes any thing that he might lawfully enjoy. He that lives on a dubious boundary-line, trusting his own stedfastness, is ever ready to slip over into a transgression. More men perish by exceeding in the measure of lawful things than in deliberate commission of things forbidden. It is a perilous footing on the giddy edge of a pre-

cipice. Again; a man may deny himself in things held by the world to be eligible and good, such as by custom are almost forced upon us, and in themselves are full of promise, and, it may be, of enjoyment, and yet are cumbrous, and hinder the devoting of ourselves to Christ. There was nothing of evil in Martha's life; but Mary's was the higher and more hallowed. Martha was careful about many things, yet all these things were innocent; Mary about only one, and that alone was needful. There is nothing evil in the possession of lands and riches, yet they bring much toil of heart, and over-burdening of care. They defraud a man of much of himself, and make him pay tribute of more than half of all his hopes, and fears, and thoughts, and hours of day and night—half, that is, of his whole earthly being; and, it may be, poverty in the world to come, as the cost or tax at which he buys the trouble of being rich. The very thought of being contented at any point short of the utmost gain, is lost from among men. They have no horizon to their aims for this world; and therefore "they have their reward." It is a poor, palpable, proximate reward here on earth. The aim of most men falls short and terminates in something on this side of the resurrection; some phantasy of earthly happiness. It may be then that each one of us may find something which he may forego for the sake of

the world to come; some possession, or purpose of life, or wish of heart; some of the permitted self-indulgences common to his rank and fortune: and this foregone for the sake of living a life of larger charity, or of more abstracted devotion, that is, for the sake of making charity or devotion the great and governing aim of the whole life, and all other things as means and opportunities to it, shall not be forgotten where all self-denials are remembered: and so shall you have your lot with him who said, "Behold, we have left all things; what shall we have therefore?"

Remember, then, brethren, that in all these acts of self-restriction there must be the sincere intent to do it for Christ's sake; otherwise our acts are like inarticulate sounds, without emphasis or meaning. Many men seem to live a mortified life, and, as far as mere self-restraint, really do so, and yet not for Christ's sake, but for some earthly end. Doubtless the rich young man denied himself for his great possessions. None forsake and forfeit more than "they that will be rich." But we know that the severest life without a conscious choice, is less than the least acts of self-impoverishment with a clear and single aim of foregoing something, that we may find it in His kingdom. Peter's worldly all was a boat and a net; and the alabaster box of ointment had a great testimony of acceptance, because she

had "done what she could." They are oftentimes the little ministries of love that shew most devotion, and most intimate resolution of heart. And remember also, that, having chosen deliberately, a man must act boldly, not looking back. Half our difficulty in doing any thing worthy of our high calling, is the shrinking anticipation of its possible after-consequences. But if Peter had tarried, and cast up all that was to come, the poverty, and wandering, and solitude, and lonely old age, the outcast life, and chance of a fearful death, it may be he would have been neither an Apostle nor a Christian.

And, once more; whereinsoever you resolve to forsake any thing for Christ's service, bear the trial patiently, and wait for the end. There must be some irksomeness, nay, some sharpness, some burden in our yoke, or we have need to look well lest we be carrying a mere mocking shadow of His cross. Be not afraid though your life be deemed singular and solitary; His was so; and theirs who at any time have followed Him, each in his way and kind, has been so likewise. When He promises you an hundred-fold, be not content with thirty-fold, or with sixty-fold. You would be happy to have any reward in His blissful kingdom; but be not therefore slack in striving for it. True, He does not offer you the crowns of Apostles; but He

offers you more than you can ask or think, more than we are ever reaching after. Every day we might attain we know not what; every day, it may be, loses or wins something of the brightness of the resurrection. All we do or leave undone has its counterpart in the unseen world. And what then is life, and what is the world, to that day, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of His glory?

Forsake all, rather than forfeit your reward, rather than be set far off from Him when He cometh in to order the guests that are bidden to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

SERMON XIII.

GOD'S KINGDOM INVISIBLE.

St. Luke xvii. 20, 21.

"And when He was demanded of the Pharisees when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."

The state of the Jews, at that time, affords to the Church of Christ an awful example of inward blindness in the full light of God's revelation. They were looking out for the coming of Christ's kingdom; but they knew not for *what* they were watching. God had told them that Messiah should come; but they had formed for themselves a low and earthly idea of His character and His kingdom. They verily thought that He would make His entry among them with the sound of the trumpet and the banners of the tribe of Judah; with the pomp of kingly splendour, and a royal train of chariots and horses, as their kings of old came "riding through the gates of Jerusalem." Doubtless they thought that all men would know by the tokens

and the heralds, and by the very majesty of its coming, when the kingdom of God should appear. So they dreamed and wandered in the blindness of their hearts. An obstinate prepossession had filled them with the thoughts and images of earth, and all the prophets of God could not purge this film from their inward sight. They looked out every way for the signs of His coming; but the signs they looked for came not; or came and spake other things, and mocked their expectation, and darkened their foolish hearts the more, and lulled them into security, at the time when of a truth the kingdom of God was come upon them. Before so much as a stray thought of foreboding arose in their hearts, whilst their eyes were all turned another way, it came upon them like a thief; suddenly and in silence it came, no man seeing it; without visible token; without the warning of a prophet; without the sound of a footfall: it was among them, and they knew it not; it was within them, and they knew not that it was of God. The kingdom came in the coming of the King Himself, as the day comes in the sun's rising. While men slept, Christ was born: a poor child and unheeded of men, none knew of His coming but His lowly mother and Joseph, and a few shepherds: to the rest He was as any other child; as one of the many who are born in sorrow, and die in silence. The

ten thousands of Israel, the scribes and the Pharisees, the elders and the chief priests, even the very courses that ministered day and night in God's temple, were taken in the snare. God's kingdom was above, and around, and within them; it embraced, and pervaded, and searched them through and through; and they knew it not.

And as was its coming, so was its course. He grew up at Nazareth, a child among children, obedient to His parents: though His mother pondered many things of Him in her heart, other men saw in Him no more than the aspect and the actings of a child. Many an eye beheld Him then which shall behold Him no more. Many gazed on Him, as we gaze on a thoughtful child, and saw no gleaming rays of the mystery which lay hid within. So, too, He began His Father's work, going about on foot, unknown and outcast, with a few who followed Him. He wrought miracles, but the prophets had wrought them too, and yet the kingdom of God came not with them. So He died; not as a king, but as a malefactor, and as a common malefactor — one of the many who, from time to time, were seen hanging on the cross. So He rose again at daybreak, when few were by. By their own falsehood they broke, so far as they were concerned, the force of this mighty sign, saying, "His disciples came by night, and stole Him away while we slept." He

passed, for forty days, to and fro in Jerusalem and in Galilee, on the mountain and by the sea; seen of His own, but not of all the people. And at the last, when He had led them out unto Bethany, away from the haunts of men, "He was taken up from them into heaven, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." Such was the coming of that kingdom, for which not Israel alone was waiting, but the whole creation travailed together with tumultuous groaning; and by this manner of its coming God put them on their trial, whether they had eyes to see the shadow of His hand, and ears to hear His voice.

So, in like manner, the kingdom of God came upon the world at large. While all mankind was full of its own gross imaginations, bowing down to the power of evil, and shaping from the creatures of God's hand blind mockeries of Himself; while men sealed their own moral debasement, by making the natures they adored a transcript of their own; there was a preparation going on, there was that unheeded fellowship, in an upper chamber, brooding over great and unimaginable things. They were men of whom the world knew nothing, but they had seen mysteries; they were not read in learned schools, but they had mused on the sea of Galilee; they had seen the feet of God upon its heaving flood, and heard His word rebuke the rudeness of

the storm. To them the unseen world stood out in visible reality; heaven had revealed its wisdom; hell had given up its secret; death had betrayed his own overthrow; and the grave spread open as a homeward path, kindling in the light of life. All this they knew; for they had seen God, and He had shewed them these things. He had filled them with the might of heaven, against which no power of earth could strive. They had in them the omnipotence of truth—of God made flesh, crucified for the life of the world.

And thus they went forth, twelve unnoticeable men; but they had in them a secret which was mighty to move the world. They went, scattered abroad into all lands, two by two, speaking grave words, of things past and things to come, pouring a little water on willing listeners, and giving to them bread and wine, with prayer and benediction. Such was God's kingdom. Wheresoever they went, it went likewise—strange and silent. Every where they had the mastery; and yet there was no "cry, as of them that strive." Every where they were more than conquerors; yet the kings and kingdoms of the earth did not fall before them. They stood visibly as before, but the unclean spirit was cast out of them. They were clothed with a mightier dignity, quickened with new life from an unseen spring, and governed by an energy which is of God.

While kings warred, and sophists wrangled, and the goings on of life tided onward as before, the kingdom of God came and stood in the midst, even as He came that night, when the doors were shut, silent and sudden, breathing peace. Its coming was not noised in the market-place; it was not announced in the palace of the Cæsars. As at the first, so always, it came without observation; a kingdom invisible, internal, dwelling in men's hearts, knitting them in holy brotherhood, blending them in one with the power and stillness of light. Even so hath been, and still is, the kingdom of God among us—from that day, and in all the world—in this land, and at this hour. There are about us the visible structures which enshrine its presence, the outward tokens of God's service, and the loud schemings of men who, under the name of the Church, would serve themselves of the Church as a contrivance for civilising mankind; but they are not God's kingdom. There is, under the badge of religion, a strife and struggle for mastery among men that bear the sacred name which the saints first bore at Antioch; but God's kingdom is not in their heady tumult: there are the visible hurryings to and fro of a worldly Jehu-like zeal for the Lord; and there are the plottings of earthly Christians—for men may plot for Christ's Church, as well as against it. The same earthly and faithless temper

of mind which sometimes resists God's will may also insinuate itself into His service. Men may think, and do think, to spread His kingdom by the stir and noise of popular excitement; but God's kingdom, like God Himself, when He communed with His prophet on the mountain-height, is not in the boisterous and fleeting forms of earthly power. As its coming and its course, so is its character. It is not in any of these: but verily it is in the midst of us; in the still small voice of the holy Catholic faith; in the voiceless teaching of Christ's holy sacraments, through which mysteries of the world unseen look out upon us; in the faithful witness of the Apostles of Christ, who, through their ghostly lineage, live among us still. The same men, who from the upper-chamber went forth to win the world, are here: their gaze is upon us, and their voices speak to us. Prophets, Apostles, martyrs, and the King of martyrs, are with us to this day. Since the veil of the temple was rent in twain, heaven and earth are laid in one: all that heaven holds in glory is with us; all that earth ever held of God is on our side; all saints perfected, all holy teachers, all servants of our God; all the spirit and the sympathy of the whole mystical body of our Lord; all the Church invisible, the unseen presence of the Word made flesh, the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, the power of the ever-blessed Tri-

nity,—all are in the midst of us, and about us, and all these are God's kingdom, of which we are heirs and servants.

Such is its true character, ghostly and inward. It has its seat in the hearts of men, in their moral habits, in their thoughts, actings, and affections, in the form and the bias of their moral being: the visible forms we see are but the shadow of the reality; God's kingdom is the obedience of the unseen spirit of man to the unseen Lord of all. We see, then, *what* it is, and we see, therefore, *how* we may fall into a fault like that of the Jews, by transmuting the true idea of its spiritual character into the base alloy of earthly notions.

If, therefore, we look for Christ's kingdom among the popular theories of political and religious speculators, we shall look for the living among the dead. We have great need to guard against this danger; for the popular opinion of this day, whether in politics or religion, leads to an earthly conception of the Church, as of a thing subject to the senses and understanding of man. There is a sort of undercurrent perpetually drawing men away towards these errors. They either think that God's kingdom is, if not in itself secular, yet to be promoted chiefly by secular measures. This is a common form of religious Erastianism, of which we see many examples. Even good people have it: and worse

people use it as a bait to draw better men into ensnaring toils, promising political advantage, increased efficiency, immediate results, apparent popularity, general co-operation—silver sounds, the bartering price, to bribe them from their stedfast hold of the broad rule of God's mysterious kingdom.

A second danger to which men are now tending is, to think that God's kingdom is to be spread by visible excitement of people's minds. The whole scheme of modern religion is visible motion; all its machinery is on the surface, all its momentum is from without. The springs of all power, if secret, are mistrusted; they must be laid bare for the childish curiosity of minds that cannot believe any thing to be going on unless they see its working, and understand how its results are brought about. This runs through almost all the movements by which men fancy the Gospel is to be propagated at home or abroad, and through all the means taken to impress it on individual minds. We are fallen upon a mechanical age, and men are blindly putting mechanical and material inventions in the place of moral power. This runs through both our popular religion and our popular education; *e.g.* the attempt to do by stimulating books what can only be done by the moral action of the Church of Christ, and the endeavour to effect upon masses of moral beings by outward systems

the work which can alone be done by the inward power of regeneration and the presence of the Holy Ghost. Much that is called efficient management of schools may be little better than this. There has been, from the beginning of the Gospel, an inwardness, and an invisibleness, about all great movements of Christ's Church, which ought to abash the hasty, talkative zeal of men into a reverent silence.

Knowing, then, the character of God's kingdom, we shall know both how to keep ourselves from these delusive schemes, and how to spread it on the earth.

We shall know, first, that the way to spread it is to have it ruling in ourselves, to have our own spirits brought into harmony with its secret workings. It is by the still strength of a holy character that we must leave the stamp of God upon the world. As they in the beginning went out from Judea into all the earth, trusting in God, counting themselves nothing, and their mission every thing; measuring themselves, and all the actions and energies of body and mind, by the faith which Christ had charged them to deliver, and counting only those labours to be God's service which fell within the limits of the truth, and all toil but unprofitable waste of life —nay, even as a very scattering of the Lord's harvest—which swerved from this rule of His ordain-

ing; so we, believing and living in the faith of our baptism, and bending all our thoughts to be what He would have us, shall best spread His kingdom in an evil and revolting world, when we carry most of its heavenly character impressed upon ourselves.

And by knowing the character of His kingdom, we shall know, too, how to make that character our own; that is, chiefly, by a life of inward holiness. We know that it is an unseen kingdom; that, although Christ's Church is visible, as God was visible in Christ, yet it is also an unseen, because an inward, power, even as life is unseen which is in man. The visible Church is the symbol of Christ's presence, as the water of baptism is the symbol of a new birth, and the holy bread and wine the symbol of Christ's body and blood. We partake of baptism, that we may partake of the Church; our new birth is an engrafting into salvation, through the blood-shedding of Christ. As we may partake of the water of baptism, or the bread and wine of the holy eucharist, and yet have no part in the saving grace they bear to man, so may we partake of the holy Catholic Church, which to the eyes of faith is visible in all lands under heaven, and yet have no fellowship with the saints of Christ, seen or unseen—with that mystical body of Christ, which is the company of all faithful people — with the

Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. We must seek to have the inward life of the Church in ourselves: it is not by loud profession of the faith, nor by headlong zeal for truth, nor by sharp controversies against error, nor by excited devotions; but by a silent and even life of faith and purity, by a patient following of Christ's holy footsteps, by a mastery of temper, by mortifying self, by a steady gaze on His mysterious passion, by being, and praying Him to make us, like Himself, that we shall bear within us the kingdom and the presence of God.

And to sustain this character within us at all times, we must remember that God's kingdom is at all times present with us.

It is upon us, and we cannot flee from it: whether we will or no, it encompasses us about; whether we remember it or no, it is ever proving us. We may be forgetful of its nearness, but it will not depart from us. We may fall, then, into a like fault with the Jews of old, and look out for Christ's coming when He is already with us;—even as some look about for their regeneration, being regenerate already, because they have not faith enough to believe the mystery of holy baptism. So, again, men are ever beguiling themselves with the dream that they shall one day be what they are not now: they balance their present consciousness of a low worldly

life, and of a mind heavy and dull to spiritual things, with the lazy thought that some day God will bring home to them in power the realities of faith in Christ. Who is there that has not at some time secretly indulged this soothing flattery, that the staid gravity of age, when youth is quelled, or the leisure of retirement, when the fret of busy life is over, or, it may be, the inevitable pains and griefs which are man's inheritance, shall break up in his heart the now-sealed fountains of repentance, and make, at last, his religion a reality? So men dream away their lives in pleasures, sloth, trade, or study. Who has not allayed the uneasy consciousness of a meagre religion with the hope of a future change? Who has not thus been mocked by the enemy of man? Who has not listened, all too readily, to him who would cheat us of the hour that is, and of all the spiritual earnings which faith makes day by day in God's service, stealing from us the present hour, and leaving us a lie in exchange? And yet, this present hour is all we have. To-morrow must be to-day before we can use it: and day after day we squander in the hope of a to-morrow; but to-morrow shall be stolen away too, as to-day and yesterday. It is *now* we must be penitent, *now* we must be holy; this hour has its duty, which cannot be done the next. There is no new coming of God with observation, to make the Gospel mightier over our

stubborn hearts, or to bid His sacraments renew the unwilling and indolent soul. The grace of the holy eucharist that was given this morning, if lost, is gone for ever. To-morrow may bring its own opportunities, but will not restore to-day's. The convictions of this hour, if unheeded, will never come back. God may send others, but these will be gone for ever. Even now, while I am speaking, the kingdom of God is within your inmost being: it is in every righteous man that serves God in purity of heart; in every penitent man who sorrows for the wreck to which by sin he has brought himself; in every repenting man who, though still wavering in the poise, yet inclines towards God; in every worldly man who feels within the visitings and promptings of a will and a power above his daily life; in every man who still trembles in himself at the thought of God so nigh. God's kingdom was very nigh to him who trembled at the judgment to come. Felix trembled once; we nowhere read that he trembled again. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me."

SERMON XIV.

THE DAILY SERVICE A LAW IN GOD'S KINGDOM.

Acts ii. 46, 47.

"And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved."

We here read the very remarkable fact, that the Apostles and the whole Church of Christ still continued, after the day of Pentecost, to attend the daily service of the temple. It must be remembered, that at this time not only was the whole mystery of our Lord's passion already completed and revealed; not only had He risen and given authority to His Apostles to gather out His Church by the sacrament of baptism; but He had also shed abroad on them the fulness of the Holy Ghost, and they had actually begun to gather together the members of His mystical body. In the words which go before those I have read to you, we are

told that three thousand souls had been baptised into the Church; that this body of the faithful "continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers;" that they "had all things common:" and yet of this definite, organised, isolated body, a Church fully formed, and conscious of its own personality, we read that "they continued daily in the temple." Surely nothing can more strikingly shew that the Apostles and first Christians knew themselves to be still bound by the primary laws of faith to worship God in public every day. The truth is this: God had commanded daily worship to His elder Church: morning and evening the sacrifice was offered to Him in the temple. So long as His elder Church was still on trial, and, though guilty of Christ's blood, not yet cast off, the daily service was still continued in its ancient line. The Apostles, with the full light of the Gospel, continued to partake of it. There was nothing contrariant between God's elder and later dispensation. They both worshipped Him in His temple, and offered the eucharistical sacrifice in their upper chambers. The time was not yet come when the daily sacrifice should be taken from the elder, and given to the Catholic Church. Until this time came, the Church of Christ daily served God in the courts of the sanctuary on Mount Zion. When the time

came that Jerusalem should be overthrown, and the Divine Presence forsake His temple, the daily service passed to the altars of the Catholic Church. The daily worship of the Apostolic Church was no more than the daily service of the Jewish, taken up, continued, illuminated, and transfigured with the glory of the Gospel. It was the same daily service which Aaron offered fifteen hundred years before, filled with spirit and truth. And so we find from the earliest dawn of the Church of Christ, that the daily service was an universal law, lying at the very root of its spiritual life. We find even the very same hours of nine and three o'clock, the times of the morning and evening sacrifice, continued. In all things, the Church knew that God's daily service was an heritage for ever; that the Jews had made forfeit of this blessed heir-loom, and that they in their stead had received it. Now, from what I have said, it is plain that the daily public worship of God is an absolute law, binding the Church of God at all times; that we are bound to observe and hand it on as much as were Moses and Aaron, or Eli, or Josedeck the high-priest; that the Apostles daily worshipped God in the temple, and all Christians received it as a primary, self-evident, or, as we are wont to say, axiomatic law of the Church, that public worship should be daily paid to Almighty God.

It would be very easy to go on, and to give a multitude of other proofs, both in the words of holy writ, and from the facts and usages of the universal Church; but I have said enough—first, because it is a fact not denied, that the Catholic Church always from the beginning has daily worshipped God in public; and next, because the duty of excusing or justifying their neglect lies upon those who have departed from the unbroken, universal law of the Church for more than three thousand years. I shall not therefore offer any more affirmative proofs; nor shall I add any arguments of a controversial sort to refute commonplace objectors. I am speaking not to gainsayers, but to men of good will. My aim now is to say what may assist those who are willing to be persuaded; but feel themselves beset by plausible objections. As for mere gainsayers, they must be dealt with apart. Charity forbids my classing with them the earnest but perplexed minds of whom I speak. I will therefore take and consider a few of the most specious objections which weigh with serious people.

1. As, for instance, it is often said that the daily service is unnecessary now, because of the prevalence of family prayer. There are many strange mistakes in this. First, it assumes that the fathers and masters of families in times past did not worship God in their households, as much as people

do now; which is a mere assumption, having no grounds but the fancy of the speaker, and is, moreover, contrary to the recorded facts of history. It is perfectly plain that family religion was a prominent feature of the Jewish dispensation, in which the daily service of God was made so absolute and binding. Indeed, this was grafted on the household worship of the patriarchs. The paschal supper was a household service; all the daily life of the Jews, in every family relation, was full of worship; all through the Old Testament history we have ever emerging tokens of family religion. We find Joshua saying, "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;" and such was the rule of every faithful Israelite. The hundred and first Psalm is the very mind of a faithful head of a consecrated household. The same we find running into the New Testament; even among proselytes. Of Cornelius, we are told that he was "a devout man, and one who feared God with all his house:" special mention is made of his communicating the vision of the angel to "two of his household servants, and a devout soldier of them that waited on him continually:"[1] and so, throughout the apostolic writings, household religion is broadly recorded. Very little can they know of the history of the faithful, who in all ages of the Church have most

[1] Acts x. 2, and 7, 8.

stedfastly waited on God in His daily worship, if they imagine that their households were without God in the world. The private lives of all great saints shew that none so consecrated their homes as they did. In the great examples of the English Church in modern days, we have direct evidence of this.[1] Everybody knows that in the last century, when Christianity in this land seems to have grown both cold and dark almost to extinction, family prayer, no less than the daily service, had well nigh perished. By God's mercy, we have been brought back again to a consciousness of our decline; but it is only the vain self-flattery of the day to talk as if we had less need now of the daily service, because, forsooth, people have begun to hallow again their desecrated homes. The objection is false in its facts. They of old who worshipped God daily in His Church, worshipped Him, far more than we, day by day, in their own households. And we painfully overstate the extent to which family worship has been restored. At the most, it is to be found in the houses of the educated, and of some others among the more unlettered but more devout of our people. But in the homes of the millions of our population, family worship is still unknown. There is something almost hard-hearted in the narrow-minded, short-sighted way in which

[1] See the lives of Hammond, Nicholas Ferrar, &c.

people use this objection, as if the few thousand households of the richer, or more leisurely, or more educated, or more religious, were all the Church had to care, and to provide, and to think, and to act for. People get into a way of thinking of themselves, and of the little horizon of their own consciousness, as if it were the whole Church of God. They are truly charitable towards all who come in contact with them; but of the wide rough world which howls round their little precinct they are unconscious altogether. But not for them only, her more favoured children, must the Church provide, but for the hundreds of thousands of households in which, through the sin of master or mistress, or father or mother, the voice of worship is never heard; that is, for the great bulk of the Church. The Church must open a shelter for the desolate, and dress an altar for those whose lot is cast in households where God is unknown. Therefore, even in this view, the objection rests on false assumptions. Nay, it turns against itself; for if family prayer were never so full an equivalent, as indeed it is not in any way, for the daily service of the Church, it is but a very small number of households that possess that equivalent. The very objection would shew the necessity of a daily service for all the rest; that is, for the great bulk of the Church. But, in truth, we are reasoning on a

false basis. Family worship is in no sense a substitute for public; and the objector, to be consistent, must extend the argument even to the Sunday, and abolish public worship altogether. Does not this shew that the whole is a confusion of things broadly distinct? Public worship is the perfection of all worship. Personal worship was in the world before the worship of a family, and the united worship of families is the worship of the Church. The private prayers of each member in a house does not discharge him from the duty of joining in the worship of the family; neither does the worship of the family discharge the household from the duty of joining in the daily worship of the Church. The daily service of the Jews was grafted on the household worship of the patriarchs, or, rather, it was developed out of it; in the public worship of the tribes of Israel the household worship of Abraham rose to its perfection: and the same is the daily service of the parish church to the family prayers of every household; these unite *men,* the other unites *families;* and such, too, is the daily worship of the universal Church as conceived apart from its several altars, to the worship of all its spiritual families, each under its spiritual head. In a word, there is a personality in the individual man, in the family, and in the Church; and each of these personalities is so related to God as to de-

mand a daily acknowledgment. It is by this means that the visible and conscious unity of the Church is maintained. And it is a remarkable and instructive fact, that, while the Catholic Churches in the East and in the West, from the beginning to this hour, have retained their daily service, they have—in the midst of whatsoever corruption in doctrine and practice may be otherwise alleged against them—nevertheless retained also a visible and conscious unity: while certain portions of the Western Church which in the last three centuries have abandoned the daily service, have lost their visible and conscious unity. They broke the bond, and trod under foot the symbol of unity, which is perpetual visible worship. And the end of this we see. Unity departed first, and truth followed speedily. The daily sacrifice was taken away, and they were broken up; and Churches fell into fragments—into congregations, ever changing, ever resolving themselves into new forms, ever wasting away, gathering round new centres, multiplying, and yet diminishing; they had let the embers on the altar die out untended, and then they sought to rekindle a sacred fire on their own hearth-stone; but the unity, and with the unity the energy, of spiritual life was gone, or it lingered first in families, and then in members of a family, and the chill of the neglected sanctuary spread through the

family into the secret chamber; and men's prayers in their own closets waxed faint and cold. Now this has been our state; and from this we are slowly recovering, anxiously chafing our numbed limbs to life. God be thanked that prayer has grown stronger in secret; that it is passing out of the closet into the family; but God forbid it should ever stay until it has passed out of the family into the sanctuary again. This is the end to which God's mercy is leading us once more, as He led His servants of old. Ours is a sadder case. Theirs was the steady growth of the first design of God to its full perfection; ours a slow recovery from a perilous decline. Let us beware how we linger by the way, and think the reconsecrating of our homes is all. We have yet to regain the visibleness and consciousness of unity; yet to learn that, though private worship is meetest for our unuttered complainings, and family worship for our earthlier brotherhood, public worship is the bond of our spiritual fellowship, the most perfect work of redeemed man, the highest energy of the newborn soul, and nighest to the bliss of heaven.

2. Another common objection is, that the daily service of the Church is unprofitable, because so few are able to attend it. Of the ability I will speak hereafter; at present we will take it for granted that only few can attend. Certainly too

many there cannot be. The more, the more blessed. But why should any be defrauded of a blessing because others deprive themselves of it? Daily service is either a blessing, or it is not. If any man will undertake to shew that it is no blessing, in God's name let him speak out, or else for ever hereafter hold his peace. We have yet to see the man who will undertake this task. But if it be a blessing, why should any be defrauded of it; and they, too, for the most part, such as stand in most need of it? Why should Simeon and Anna be thrust back from the gate that is "called beautiful," because others see "no comeliness" in it "that they should desire" it? What is it that men, and sometimes good men, would say, when they talk of the profitableness or unprofitableness of this or that in religion? In what company of the merchants of Midian were they so nurtured as to be unconscious of the bartering, selfish, unhallowed temper which breathes through such a word? Is it not fearfully like to his words who asked, "Doth Job serve God for nought?" Alas! we are cast upon an age of merchandise. All our life savours of it. Our theology draws its parallels from it. Our sanctuaries are built by its schemes. Our very hearts buy and sell in the temple; whereby we may know that He is not far off who, with a scourge of cords, once cleansed His

Father's house: and "who may abide the day of His coming, or who shall stand when He appeareth?" God forbid, we should come to this place only because it is profitable to *us!* We worship God because it is an homage due to *Him.* What is right is always profitable; but woe to the man that does right only that he may be profited! Honesty is the best policy; but he is no honest man who pays his just debts only that he may be a gainer. He is no better than a sordid, unprincipled man, who would just as lief defraud his creditors as pay them, if only the balance of profit lay on that side. Even the heathen of old were wiser than our philosophers now-a-days. We are gravely told that the expedient will always be found to be the right. Most true; but conscience is man's guide in moral actions; and it is not conscience, but *calculation,* which judges of the expedient. Let a man do the right, and he will infallibly do the expedient, thing. God has given him a moral sight to discern the right as the test and as the including form of true expediency: to invert the order of our moral and reasonable constitution, is like pretending to judge of tastes by the smell or the hearing. For once that we may be right, we shall mistake a thousand times. And so in the holiest things; we have no test of what is profitable but what is right. We have no warrant to use the word, ex-

cept in speaking of what it is our duty to do. St. Paul says, "I *profited* in the Jews' religion above many my equals,"[1] and that was in the way I speak of, *i. e.* exact conformity to the rule of duty. There is no form of evil, heresy and schism included, into which a man who, instead of what is ordered, makes what is profitable his test in religion, is not likely to fall. And now to take up once more our subject:

The daily worship of God in public is a visible act of homage due to Him as the Creator, Preserver of the world, and as the Redeemer and Sanctifier of the Church. It is a solemn approach and address to the Majesty unseen. The seraphim veil their faces before Him on high; the cherubim adore in the glory of His presence; archangels and angels cry aloud; the heavens, and all the powers therein, night and day worship the Lord of Hosts; the holy Church throughout all the world evermore in matins and evensong doth acknowledge and confess the living and true God: it is a visible creed, uttered in symbol, set forth in oblations, chants, and bended knees; it is the new-born life, reaching out its hands unto the Great Father, deep calling unto deep; the one baptism, calling upon the regeneration of all things; the new creation of God, manifesting itself to the eye of flesh in the midst of

[1] Gal. i. 14.

this wrongful and turbulent world. This is the meaning which angels read in the daily worship of the Church on earth. Let us read no less. Even though nothing else could be said for the daily public service of God in His Church, let this suffice. Whether it be profitable or no to pay God His due homage, if any doubt now, he shall know in the morning of the resurrection. It is plain, then, that though there be never so few in His house, this homage is both due and acceptable in His sight. He has been beforehand with our objections, and has said, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them;" to every, the smallest, gathering of His one Church He has pledged His presence. And their homage is no less acceptable than the worship of the heavenly companies whom no man can number, whose songs are as the voice of many waters. To object on the score of the smallness of the congregation, is a direct slight of our Lord's promise, and an unintended confession that men have forgotten the whole theory of worship, which is homage paid to the unseen presence of God.

And, besides this, it is manifest that the duty of worshipping God day by day rests upon the same ground as the obedience of faith. How incongruous is it for those who so jealously contend that the works of faith are a free service, to talk of *pro-*

fitableness, as if that were the test of public worship! The whole life of faith is a free service—as it were, a perpetual eucharist: "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast." And how intimately does this harmonise with all that has been said of the daily homage due to God! From the rising to the going down of the sun, the Church redeemed from the gates of hell offers her daily eucharist; not asking, How shall this profit me? but ever saying, "It is very meet, right, and our bounden duty, that we should at all times and in all places, give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God." By this, again, that is by the whole idea and spirit of a life of faith, the low calculations of profit are excluded from the subject of the daily service.

But that it may not seem as if the objection had the lightest weight, I will say that the highest and most real profit of the Christian is, after all, to be found in the daily worship of Almighty God. I might content myself with saying, it must be so, because it is a homage and an eucharistical offering due to God our Redeemer. But I will explain what I mean more fully. In the daily service of the Church, we are brought more sensibly under the shadow of the unseen world than at any other time. Though we may have livelier feelings at other times of prayer, certainly never have we so

great a sense of awe and reverence as in the house of God. It thereby sustains, by a perpetual help, the ever-fainting faith of our hearts: it keeps a daily check upon this visible world, which is always growing up about us and closing us in on every side. First, then, it is a witness for the unseen world. Next, it strengthens the habits of devotion. Let any one who has kept a watch upon himself say, whether it is not most certain that at no time is his mind more fenced from distraction, and more drawn towards the object of worship, by the outward admonitions of the eye and ear, than in the church. And this passes into all the acts of public worship, — into the confessions, prayers, praises, thanksgivings. Again; there is a direct incitement to devotion in the consciousness of united worship. So it was ordained by the constitution of man's heart; and this natural feeling is the bond of the communion of saints. Man was as little made to worship alone, as to live alone: united homage is the destined bliss of man. And, once more; there are special promises made to united prayer: Christ has promised to be in the midst of us, and to grant what we ask with one accord. We cannot limit this blessing: no man can say how great it may be. And shall any man say that this is not *profitable?* or that all this is not necessary for *every* redeemed soul of man? or that daily worship is a duty less binding,

and a blessing less to be longed for, in a parish where there are only two or three who come to share it, than in a parish where there are two or three thousand? Duties and blessings are no more to be determined by numbers than are the gifts of the Holy Ghost to be purchased with money. Wheresoever there is a church, an altar, and a priest, there God looks for His daily homage, and there He will hallow, by large gifts of daily benediction, the souls of the two or three who wait upon Him. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength." All the services and sacraments of Christ are as necessary for the sanctification of *one* soul as of the whole Church on earth.

3. Again; it is sometimes said, that the pastors of the Church have no time for daily service: that if they were every day in the church, they would have less time to give to visiting their people, managing their schools, and the like. It is considerate in people to allege these reasons for them, though assuredly they would not allege them for themselves. And that because they know that the Church strictly commands "all priests and deacons" to "say daily the morning and evening prayer, either privately or openly, not being let by sickness or some other urgent cause;" and also, that "the curate that ministereth in every parish church or chapel, being

at home, and not being otherwise reasonably hindered, shall say the same in the parish church or chapel where he ministereth, and shall cause a bell to be tolled thereunto, a convenient time before he begin, that the people may come to hear God's word, and to pray with him;"[1] and also that the Church, in the Ordination Service, places the ministering in the church foremost among the offices of the priesthood. So far from diverting their time, it would give it a fixedness and regularity which would wonderfully extend their pastoral usefulness. Every day, at a certain hour, their people would know where to find them, for counsel, or consolation, or help of any kind. Nothing would more assist them in their office, than a habit formed in their people, of coming to seek them in the place where the parish priest is daily known to stand ministering in the order of his office. They are now too often compelled to act in an obstructed and unheeded way, as a mere visitor or reader in the cottages of their people; and they that have most tried it, will best know how hard it is to win their thoughts from the crowd of household-work which lies around them. What we want is, to stir our people to some more direct, personal, energetic acts of religion, than the passive listening to a sermon, either in church or out of it. The act of

[1] Preface to Book of Common Prayer.

coming to the house of God, and praying, is such an act; but of this part of the subject we are not speaking now. The clergy of the Church would be greatly furthered in their pastoral work, by a disposition in their people to join them in daily worship. It would restore, also, to their office its true but most forgotten character, and bring down unknown blessings upon their ministry.

4. I will notice only one more objection. It is said, that the habits of life are so changed as to make daily service impossible. And certainly, when we see that from sunrise to sunset the working-man is at his labour; the mechanic or manufacturer twelve or sixteen hours a day at his furnace or his loom; the man of business, the lawyer, the trader, from nine or ten in the morning to five or six in the evening, ever toiling; the man of the world, even still more laboriously, and without relaxation, bound down to the round of courtesies, and engagements, and usages of life, we may well confess that the habits of life are changed—but for the worse. Once the world waited upon the Church, and took its hours and seasons from the hours and seasons of God's worship; His service went first in the cycle of all the goings-on of life: but now all is reversed. The Church must wait upon the world. Worship is thrust aside; is pent up in one day of the seven; is

narrowed to one service in that one day. The poor working-man wrings a scant livelihood out of an over-laboured week. Six whole days are his earthly master's share: one is all he has for God and his own soul. Far worse is it with the poor sicklied workman in the manufactory; and hence comes a sour and restless discontent. Life is an uncheered, grating toil, which jars and galls the whole man in soul and body. Life has for them few gleams, little or nothing of gladness or of freedom: even wife and children, which make the natural heart to spring, give to a wearied and saddened people but little happiness. In them they see their own toil-worn life, as if it would never end, beginning over again. So, too, with the learned professions, and with rich traders, and men of commerce; they are ever complaining of an unrelieved pressure of daily toil. Many men fairly break down, in body or mind, under the stress of life. Of those who cannot wait on God daily, because they are so over-laboured in doing the nothingnesses of society, I need hardly speak; and yet these are the habits of life which are pleaded in bar of the daily worship of God. Times and habits are changed; indeed, and miserably for the worse: changed so that all men are crying out for rest, and for release from an oppressive burden; so that the great adversary of God's Church has prevailed, through these changes, to

turn God's house to a desolation, and to make fast its porches against our endeavours to return. Well were it if this merely external hinderance were all he had raised between us and the daily homage of the Church. Perhaps at no time was the moral disposition of man so alienated from daily public prayer. We have not only lost this great axiom of the Church, but the very intuition to perceive it. It has become a matter of inquiry, and doubt, and argument. It is faintly affirmed, and vehemently gainsayed. Be it then ever remembered that the daily service of the Apostolic Church was grafted on the daily service of the Jewish. The whole body of the first Christians assumed it as a law in God's Church for ever. Men have now abandoned it as a body; and its hold, even over individual minds, is comparatively faint. The best are unconscious how awful a silence there is between God and a Church which does Him homage only one day in seven: and in this silence must grow up a still more awful strangeness; and the Church have fewer tokens of the Divine presence, and fainter reflections of His imparted sanctity.

Now most certain it is, that the habits of life are not so absolute, but that a little firmness would soon throw them again into a better order. Let us only resolve to "seek *first* the kingdom of God;" to take the cycle and the seasons of the Church

as our governing rule, and to make our lives bend to its appointments. When once the Church has restored the solemn days of fast and festival, and the stated hours of daily prayer, there will be an order marked out for all men of good will to follow. And, at the last, we shall once more see this fretful, busy world checked, and for a while cast out, by the presence of the world unseen. Its burden will be sensibly lessened; and the hearts of men will have some shelter, and rest to turn to, in the dry and glaring turmoil of life.

Then among us, as of old, men may go up in secret to the house of prayer, to make their sin-offerings, and their peace-offerings, and their offerings of thanks. No sun should then go down on sins unconfessed, or blessings unacknowledged; and if any be truly hindered, still in their own home, or by the way-side, or in crowded marts, or in busy cities, or in the fields, — when the bell is heard afar off, or the known hour of prayer is come, they may say with us the confession and the Lord's prayer; and though far from us on earth, may meet us in the court of heaven.

SERMON XV.

THE HIDDEN LIFE.

COLOSSIANS iii. 3.

"Your life is hid with Christ in God."

By the sacrament of holy baptism we were both buried and raised with Christ; both in power and in symbol we were made partakers "of a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness." Our present life, therefore, is as the life of our Lord after His resurrection, spiritual and immortal. We have no more to do with the world than if we were dead. We are even, as it were, ascended with Him. St. Paul tells the Ephesians that God hath "raised us up together" with Him, "and made us sit in heavenly places;" and the Philippians, that "our conversation is in heaven;" and here he says, "seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God;" for, as to all this world and the works that are therein, "ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Now consider what it is St. Paul says: he

tells us that our life is *hid;* that there is a depth and a mystery about our life. Now this signifies;—

First, That the origin or source of our spiritual life is hidden. We derive it from Christ, and He is hid in the unseen world, in the glory of God; and yet our life is hardly so much any thing received from Christ, as a oneness with Christ. He is our life. We are so made partakers of Him, that He said, "Because I live, ye shall live also." As St. Paul says, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." This is no mere parable or figure. By our birth into this world the first Adam lived in us. We have his nature, and the stamp of his disobedience. His fallen manhood was in us. By our second birth in holy baptism we are made partakers of the second Adam, and of His raised and glorified manhood: all His mystical body is united to Him, so as with their Head to make but one person. All members of His body are so one with Him that they live in Him, and He in them. There is one life, filling and quickening all; and that one life has its origin and source in the unseen world from Christ, who is "hid in God."

In the next place, St. Paul's words mean that the habitual course and tenour of our spiritual life is hidden and secret from the world. This may seem, at first sight, contrary to our Lord's com-

mand, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works;" and to all the multitude of precepts respecting the power of a holy example. But it is not so. The holiness of the saints cannot fail to be seen. It breaks out by its own strength, and shines around them. If they would, they could not hide it. Even their shrinking from the gaze of the world turns into a bright grace of lowliness, and betrays itself by the act of concealment. But St. Paul is not speaking of this outward manifestation of the spiritual life; but of its powers, and energies, and habitual inward actings. There is a world of life between a Christian and Christ his unseen Lord, which the eye of man never beholds. The whole life of interior repentance, the lonely and ever-repeated confessions of his sins, the indignant scrutiny of his own hidden thoughts, the tears which are laid up in the vial of God, and the sighs which are noted in His book; all the energies of faith, and the breathings of prayer, and the groanings which cannot be uttered, and the awful converse of the heart with God, and the struggles of the will, and the kindlings of hope and love, and all the host of living thoughts which pass to and fro between the spirit of a redeemed man and the Lord of his redemption;—all these, I say, make up a hidden life which the world can neither see nor scan. And this has been ever going on, more or less, in each

one of us, from our baptism. And how wonderfully is all this, from time to time, excited and complicated by the changes and chances of life—by the advents of joy, and the weight of sorrows! They that best know each other's hearts, how little do they truly understand what a vast realm of spiritual life lies hid in each one of us! how it reaches upward to heaven in height, and downward to the deep beneath; how it touches the eternal bounds of good and ill! And all this is in each one with whom we daily speak, whom we love, and well-nigh live for. We see them smile, or look cast down, or hang in doubt, or fix their resolution, and speak promptly, and then muse on what they have done: and we kneel by them, and worship God, and feed on the same eucharist, and have the same hopes, and fears, and prayers: and yet how little do we truly know them! what a fine illuminated edge, as it were, of their spirits it is that we have beheld, and our love has fastened on! The full breadth of it shines inwardly, and is turned on the unseen world alone. How all the history of mankind shews this strange truth! Take Enoch for an example. He lived in the midst of men, and saw all their doings, and they looked upon his daily life; and he was the father of Methuselah, and of sons and daughters. He was not unlike any other man that feared the Lord. But what a secret lay hid in him!

"Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him."[1] And so, ever since, between God and His true servants there has been a hidden world of life. The saints of Christendom are as a line of dazzling riddles. The world sees them, knows that they do not belong to it, that they are above it, that they have a strange fellowship with things unseen; it chafes at them, mocks them, hates them, but fears them. It may slay, but it cannot scorn them. There is something too real, majestic, and awful for the world to dare any thing but their death. So it was with St. Paul, and with all prophets and martyrs, and with all the great names in the story of the Church. They have, as it were, a twofold being, or two sides to their life: the one written by the world, all confusion and perplexity; the other recorded by the Church, full of unity and light. And yet neither the world nor the Church can give the full outline, for their "life was hid with Christ in God." We must wait until they "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

And now let us follow out some of the consequences of this truth. It is evident that there are great diversities of character among Christians—diversities of a remarkable sort—some only in degree, some almost in kind. Between those who live purely, and in the fear of God, there is often great

[1] Genesis v. 24.

and visible difference, and yet, at the same time, a predominant likeness and a true fellowship. But between those who live in habitual devotion, and those who live a blameless life (for I am not speaking of sinners), without the living marks of faith, there is a difference so sensible and deep, as to make them almost unintelligible to each other. Now the true key of this difficulty is to be found in these words of St. Paul. All alike have been made partakers of the one hidden source of life, by baptism into Christ, which is a gift of God, like the breath of our nostrils, passively received into their being: but in the energy and habit of their living powers, as distinguished from the gift of spiritual life, they differ so greatly, that some so live in the world which is here visible, as hardly to live at all in the world unseen; some so habitually dwell in the hidden world, as to have but little part in this; and all the rest vary in their character, in the measure in which things seen or unseen govern and control their life. For instance, Christians whom we call worldly are of the first sort. The field of their whole life lies on this side of the veil which hides from us the unseen. There is no indulged evil about them; their morals are pure; they are kind; they seldom speak harshly of any one; they are careful and exact in their calling; prudent, foreseeing; discreet advisers on

a large range of subjects in morals and politics; they seem to have scanned thoroughly this world which has importuned their attention; and they will go with you round the whole horizon of this visible common-place life; but when you come to the point where seen things blend with the unseen, they, as it were, vanish at once. They are gone; and you feel as if you were alone, by yourself, speaking aloud. It is not at all that they reject or make light of the objects of faith; but they do not see them: the faculty of perception lies in them undeveloped, as the sense of harmony in an untutored ear. It is simply a state of privation of senses: the hidden powers of hearing and sight are in them, but have never been roused into consciousness. We see this much more painfully in people that love the pleasures of life. The easy, acquiescent habit which grows over such minds, seems to make them incapable of steady and serious thought. Self-pleasing, even in its purest and most refined forms, is highly deadening to the keenness of the inward life; and it is remarkable that such persons are often full of religious emotions and religious conversation. Sensibility, or a quickness of superficial feeling, is the exact part of their mind that is most unfolded and excited by their common life; and a desire to maintain a good tone and standard in judging of

passing events, compels them to form a habit of talking religiously. But both the feelings and the words pass off into mere unrealities; they come from no depth of the spiritual life; they are wrung out by no conscious energy of the will; they are out of proportion with the character, being high and deep enough for the utterance of saints. In them it is simply artificial; mere pictures of the fancy, and simulation of the active intellect. Now such people follow the order of the Church, much as they yield to the order of the world. Acquiescence is their habit: they attend fast and festival; they gaze on ceremonies and sacraments—but they see only the outside. They cannot penetrate within; their inward sight is blindfold. And so they live on, year by year, the exterior habits of the mind knitting more closely, and indurating more and more the susceptibility of their interior life. The gift of regeneration lies in them, living indeed, but without a pulse of life. Theirs is a visible, external life, acted on from without—not thrown out from within. They are a part of this material world, and move along with it, and are conformed to it. Doubtless, even in such persons there are many thoughts and movements of the soul towards what is to come hereafter; but these are instincts of the heart and conscience, almost involuntary and irresponsible. The greater part of all their conscious,

voluntary, responsible life is turned to this visible world; their hidden life is so deaf, and blind, and lifeless, that they may be truly said to have little more than the gift which they passively received in holy baptism.

In direct contrast to these people that I have spoken of, are they who so live in the world unseen as to have but little part in this life: such, for instance, as those whose characters have been moulded, by the virtues of truth and grace, upon the laws and worship of the Church; whose spiritual life has been unfolded either by a steady growth from the waters of baptism, or by the after-work of a keen and searching change. We find in them a purity and dignity of mind, a refinement and elevation, a free play in all the powers of their spiritual being, and a quickness to pierce into the mind of symbols and mysteries, which is altogether wonderful. Every one is conscious of it but themselves. To them it is as unperceived, by any reflection, as health or sight. They go on unknown to themselves, living a life above the world, which makes us wonder at them. They are ever putting forth more and more of power, and unfolding faculties so altogether new, so manifold, and so adequate to every season of great trial, whether in action or endurance, that we seem never to have known them before. They hardly

look to us like the same men; and the more energy of will and reason, the more of sanctity and wisdom, they unfold to us, the more we feel persuaded that there is an inexhaustible depth behind, a source somewhere out of sight, from which they are perpetually drawing in new powers of life. In all their judgments of moral character, their counsels of action, their foresight, schemes, and cautions, there is a piercing strength, and a clear wisdom, so unperceived before they uttered it, but so self-evident when spoken, that we are fain to hear in silence. About all their actions in life there is a plainness and a power, a calmness, a grace, and a greatness, which makes us feel that they move on some higher path than we, and are numbered in a higher fellowship. And so in truth it is. Their "life is hid with Christ in God;" their "fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Their visible exterior life in this world is but the lesser and lower portion of their being. They come down, as it were, from the source and sanctuary of their hidden life, to mix in the goings-on of this world. The wonderful light and irradiation which breaks out on all sides of their character is no less than this, the mind of Christ shining out through their renewed manhood. They are channels by which it streams forth into this fallen world. Year by year

they have less of this visible life about them; they seem to put off its mortality before the time. They are more and more drawn within the veil. They come out seldomer into this turbulent life; their dwelling is, in prayer and silence, "with Christ in God."

These, then, are the two extremes on either side; and the number of each is few. The greater part of men are to be found between these two decided characters; under the absolute predominance of neither the visible nor the invisible world; but wavering between both, balancing in an ever-varying poise, inclining now to the one, now to the other side. And this is the key to all the vacillation and inconsistency of men otherwise good. They are better in aim than in act; in conviction than in resolution; and their will is dragged to and fro. Hence we find people apparently of a worldly mind doing acts of decided faith; and people of a religious character committing acts of mere secularity. This is according as either bias of the will prevails in turn; they have a sympathy with both worlds, and both still keep a hold upon them. Again; we see people more decided than the last, who have ventured, as it were, a little way into the world unseen; and then have grown afraid: they feel lonely and disquieted; they see others hang back and leave them to go alone; and they

fear to go on. Such persons have a deep conviction of the reality of the life of faith, and a high perception of the blessedness of living under the shadow of God's throne; they have at times felt His unseen hand drawing them within the folds of His presence, and have been conscious that awful lights have fallen upon their hearts. And yet it seems to them, that if they would follow His leading, they must "needs go out of the world;" that they must make great sacrifices; give up many pleasant dreams of life; forego much they have been toiling after. Such is the state of most men—neither one thing nor the other; lacking boldness to go onward or backward; lacking devotion to be wholly devout, and yet having so much that they could never be happy again without it. They have a great measure of real seriousness, and of clear insight into the hidden meaning of the Church and its mysteries. And yet this is not the predominant feature of their character. Their visible calling is that which imposes its primary laws on their whole life; they are first traders, or students, or statesmen, or husbands, or fathers, and then subordinately they are Christians. Their faith is kept in check by the prescriptive rights, as it were, of their worldly calling, which stamps a governing character on their life, limiting the play of faith in the unseen within certain arbitrary

bounds of prudence, or moderation, or established usage, and the like. Now between such men and the invisible world there is, indeed, a certain kind and measure of intercourse; but it is sadly darkened and thwarted. They are forced to pay homage first to this world, and their allegiance to the other is but secondary and conditional.

There are two further remarks I would make on what has been said: and, first, that there is no lot, nor calling in life (if so be it be only a lawful one) in which a man may not so live as that his life shall be "hid with Christ in God." It is not only prophets and apostles, or monastic orders, or priests waiting at the altar, who may so stand aloof from this world: it is within the power of all men, be their station never so public, be their calling in life never so full of toil. We need not withdraw from the eyes of men to pass into the world unseen. We are not any the more within the veil because we are hid from the sight of men. We may be in a wilderness, and yet shut out from the invisible world; we may be in kings' courts and crowded cities, and yet be "hid with Christ in God." The avenues stand open every where alike; but it is the heart that must enter in. If we have a strong, self-collected faith, it matters not where we are;—all visible things grow transparent, and unseen things shine through upon us. We walk as

in an illuminated cloud, which softens, but cannot hide what is before our eyes. And that, too, not in acts of devotion and in hallowed shrines alone, but every where. In our chamber, in our household, by the way-side, in the scene of our public duties, at all seasons, all day long, the whole vision of the hidden world hangs before the eye of the wakeful spirit. Therefore let no man plead, in behalf of his sightless, inactive faith, that he is baffled by his lot in life, his duties, his round of labour, the distractions of society, and the like. If in any thing he is consenting to the neighbourhood and contact of evil, then his plea is true; but if his lot in life is that which God has chosen for him, it is nothing less than charging his hinderances on God. From every lawful state in life there is a direct and open way into the world unseen.

The last remark I will make is, that we must be ever moving one way or the other, either to or from the source of our hidden life. To hold an equipoise between the seen and the unseen is impossible. Our inward being is ever changeful and fluctuating; and as it gains or loses its sympathy with the realities of faith, so it will either rise or fall in the scale of spiritual life. We are always tending to one of the two extremes: the inward must subdue the outward to itself, or the outward will stifle the inward life. Let us, therefore, make our

choice, and let us choose wisely. Most pure is the happiness which may be ours, if only we will; a bliss untinged by a shade of sorrow. There are no thorns now in the hidden life of Christ; no chill, no blemish in its gladness. All things, even the best, below God, have a canker somewhere, and the taint of a fallen world is on them. Not so the life which is with Christ in God. It is as peaceful as it is pure; high above the reach of all perturbations. They that live in Him have their dwelling in God; they look out of Him as out of an everlasting shelter; and look down on the wide weltering sea of this world's troubled life. Let us pray of Him to draw us within the veil; to make us forgotten among men; to gather up all our life into Himself; that "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear," we may "appear with Him in glory."

SERMON XVI.

SINS OF INFIRMITY.

St. Matthew xxvi. 41.

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

These words of our Lord in the garden, when He came from His agony and found the apostles asleep, are very sorrowful and touching. They shew an ineffable depth of tenderness and compassion. He uttered no reproach, no sharp complaint, at their unseasonable slumber; but only, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" and He turned away all thought from Himself to them; and, for their own sakes, bade them "watch and pray," for that their trial was at hand. Now in this we have a wonderful example of the love of Christ. How far otherwise we should act in such a case, we all well know. When any seem to us to be less keenly awake to the trial we may happen to be undergoing, we are above measure excited, as if some great wrong were done to us. There is nothing we resent

so much as the collected manner of those who are about us in our afflictions. If they still seem the same when we are so changed—even if they can still be natural, feel common interests, and take their wonted rest, we feel exceedingly aggrieved, and almost forget our other trial, in the kindling of a sort of resentment. We have here, then, a wonderful pattern of gentleness and forgetfulness of self; for if ever there was a season of sorrow to any born of woman, it was the hour of agony in the garden. It seems strange to us how His disciples could have slept at such a time. They had but then left the upper chamber, where they had seen and heard all the sad words and acts of that last passover; they had heard Him saying, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I *suffer;*" and little as they understood the full meaning of that mystery of sorrow, yet from His way of speaking they must have felt overcast by the belief that some trial, greater than any before, was nigh at hand. Moreover, they had seen Him "troubled in spirit," and heard Him say, "one of you shall betray me."[1] And, besides this, His parting words to them when He went away from them a stone's cast in the garden, were enough, we should have thought, to keep us waking: "Then saith He unto

[1] St. John xiii. 21.

them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me."[1] And with all these things full upon them, it would have seemed that they, least of all, could have fallen asleep —they, the favoured three—Peter who loved his Master with so earnest and warm a love, and James who was counted worthy to be the companion of Peter, and the disciple who an hour before had lain on His breast at supper. In St. Luke's Gospel, we read that they were "sleeping for sorrow."[2] And this secret cause of their heaviness, it may be, the evangelist learned of some one who well knew what passed on that awful night. Who can doubt but that they sadly told all their infirmities? St. Matthew (and St. Mark also) say that "their eyes were heavy."[3] And they that have entered into the depths of sorrow know well how nearly akin to slumber is the languor and amazement of unutterable grief; how the "sight faileth for looking upward," and the eyes, which gaze fixedly and see nothing, close for very emptiness. But none knew this better than He, the Man of Sorrows, when He spoke these few words of mild upbraiding. It was at that hour they had most need to watch, as being by sorrow least able to stand against temptation. Theirs, then, is an example of an almost blameless infirmity; and yet, though hardly to be

[1] St. Matt. xxvi. 38. [2] St. Luke xxii. 45.

[3] St. Matt. xxvi. 43.

blamed, it was not the less beset with danger. And here we have a great warning, and a no less consolation: a great warning, indeed, for if they slumbered at such an hour, how may we not fear that our temptations will often fall upon us unawares? and yet, for our consolation, we see how gently He bare with them; and He will surely be no more severe with us. In truth, He made their defence for them; His very warning taught them how to plead with Him; and by teaching it, He acknowledged the truth of the plea: "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Let us consider these words.

And, first, we must observe, that by "the spirit" is to be understood what we call the heart or will, illuminated by the grace of God: as where St. Paul says, "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh;"[1] and where he prays for the Thessalonians, that their "whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless;"[2] and again, "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."[3] And next, by "the flesh" is to be understood our fallen manhood, with its affections and lusts, so far as they still remain even in the regenerate. Now before our regeneration we are under the power of the flesh; then there is no willingness to serve God aright: after our regeneration, the flesh is put under the dominion of the

[1] Gal. v. 17. [2] 1 Thess. v. 23. [3] Rom. viii. 16.

Spirit. St. Paul speaks not as an Apostle endowed above other men, but as one born again of the Spirit, when he says, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me."[1] Such, I say, is the state of the regenerate. They "*can* do all things;" but, alas, they do not. The flesh has no more dominion, except we willingly re-invest it with its sovereignty. We may still betray ourselves to it again, and become two-fold more enslaved to it than before; and short of this, even though we no more yield to it a dominion over us, yet it is to us "a sore let and hinderance in running the race that is set before us." When it cannot overcome, yet it still can sap and weaken; or, in other words, it is a weakness in itself; for, under the governing power of the Spirit, our regenerate manhood becomes a servant of God; it is once more consecrated to God's service; but having been stripped and wounded by the powers of sin, and left as it were dead, even after its rising again through holy baptism, it is weak and failing: and therefore we find such paradoxes in the lives of true Christians. They are ever willing, and purposing, and desiring, and yearning, and beginning well; and even more than this, we see them growing in grace and spiritual strength; and yet we find them also failing and falling short, ever trying to reach some far

[1] Phil. iv. 13.

mark, but not attaining it—purposing great things, and hardly accomplishing little things. Such, indeed, for at least a large part of their earthly life, is the state of most baptised people: and that not because they are under any subduing dominion of indwelling sin, as some would have us believe, who expound St. Paul's description of his state before his regeneration as if he were speaking of himself after he had been born again through the grace of Christ; but because "the flesh is weak,"—that is, their whole nature, though made new of the Spirit, is still feeble, and soon exhausted, and ready to slumber, and easily cast down. And this is what St. Paul means when he says, "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary, the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."[1] He is speaking, not of two natures, but of one—of one fallen but regenerate manhood, in which linger still the susceptibilities of evil, besetting and weakening the renewed heart and will by many sore and stubborn hinderances. Such, then, is the state of good men, of whom it may be truly said, that the "spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Now we may take one or two particular examples of this truth.

1. For instance, we may trace the weakness of our nature in the great fluctuations of our inner state.

[1] Gal. v. 17.

I do not mean in such as end in a falling away from baptismal grace, or even the mastery of any grievous sin. These are examples rather of the strength of the flesh in its own hereditary rebellion against God, than of the weakness of our regenerate nature. I am speaking now of such variations as fall within the limits of a life in the main obedient to the faith. Now no one can have carefully watched over himself, without perceiving how different he is at different times. Let him compare the trembling exactness of his obedience, his prolonged and earnest prayers, his subdued and yielding temper, in a time of sorrow or great fear; or, again, the depth of his self-accusation and repentance, and the watchful abhorrence with which he repelled the approaches of evil thoughts in a time of severe sickness, or in a season of great spiritual blessings; let him compare such state with his condition, it may be, some few years after, when change of position in life, or mere toil, or elevation, or accession of wealth, has come upon him. Though he is still in the fear of God, he is a changed man. It is difficult, perhaps, to see exactly what is the change. It may be, though he feels it himself, he could not tell what it is; only that he is more self-possessed, less vivid in faith, less susceptible of impressions — that he retains them less steadily, and has lost, as it were, the life and flexibility of his mind. Now there can be no

doubt that all the while he has been sincere in his desires to serve God; but, either by the withdrawal of the outward discipline under which he was once brought nigher to the unseen world, or by weariness in well-doing, and the fretting of little daily counteractions, he has given way, and declined from his former and more devoted state. Of course such persons are in great danger of being overthrown by the direct assault of sins coming upon them suddenly, as St. Peter was, a few hours after our Lord warned him in the garden. It is more likely than not that such falls do mingle in from time to time; and, though really sorrowed over, yet leave behind a deadening effect, which is not enough noted at the time, and shews itself afterwards only indistinctly in effects, or as one among many causes of declension.

2. We may take as another example of this weakness, the speedy fading away of good impressions even in those that live lives of real devotion. In the first place, it seems true that the mind cannot without a strain be ever at one pitch. Like the power of sight, it must have its intervals of intension and remission. It seems by some law of its inscrutable nature, to need to be unbent; and therefore, after fixed contemplation of the unseen world, or prayer of greater length, or after a day of fasting, it may be that the conditions of our nature require that it

should be relaxed. And this may be called, in one sense, the weakness of the flesh. For of the ministering angels who excel in strength, and of the spirits of the just made perfect, we are told, that they rest not day or night from their heavenly adoration. In them there is nothing of earth, and therefore nothing of infirmity. They mount up as eagles, with ever-renewing strength. In one sense, then, it may be said that, owing to the weakness of the flesh, our adoration is but a faint and broken reflection of theirs. But this is not the sense with which we have now to do. This is the inevitable, blameless infirmity of fallen man. We are speaking of something further; something which, if we will, is within the limits of our strength; and therefore, if we will not, is worthy of blame. For instance, it is a sad thought when we reflect for how short a time we retain the posture of mind which was wrought in us by our last day of fasting, or our last act of self-examination. For a time, we were bowed under the Eternal Will, and awed by a sense of God's nearness, and a sight of our own sullied hearts: for a time, all the faults of our inferior nature were so held in check, that we seemed to be set free from their oppression; our better self rose to the surface, and maintained its ascendency; we were drawn into harmony with the secret order of His spiritual kingdom; all things, even the

most adverse and chastening, seemed to us to be good; we were willing to be disposed of by Him, though it should cost us all we had been longing for in life. Again, in times of great affliction, when, by acts of self-humiliation, and pondering over the tokens of His purpose, we have brought ourselves to a calm submissive state, so as to feel, as well as know, that if we had chosen for ourselves, we should have chosen amiss, and that our piercing sorrows are the last hope of breaking us into obedience, the necessary means of winning for us a crown in heaven; — it is sad to see how quickly these pure and blessed thoughts, with their fresh and vivid feelings, are blown away like the morning dew. So great is the change, that we seem to be other men. Our lighter thoughts fritter away our humiliation; lofty and self-trusting impulses belie our acts of lowliness, and seem to turn our very prayers into an unreal and intrusive profession; we grow restless, self-guiding, wilful; we take up again a self-confident tone, and lose our seat among those that are poor in spirit, or we grow fretful, and retract our acquiescence in God's chastisement, and in anguish of heart forfeit the blessing which should have abased and sanctified us. In like manner, when, by a great struggle against ourselves, we have overcome any evil temper of the mind, by which, for a season, we have been

mysteriously buffeted, though for a time it seem to lie dead within us, it comes back upon us unawares, and takes possession of the whole mind before it betrays its return. All at once we find ourselves within its grasp; and all the strife is to be fought over again. And we feel wearied out, and to have no more spirit in us; as if, in St. Paul's words, "sin revived, and" we "died."

They that have watched themselves narrowly, know by what subtle and imperceptible movements of the mind we thus sink away from our better dispositions; and how all the while that we are desiring to hold our state unchanged, our highly wrought impressions are passing off. Not only do things without slacken and draw us down,—such as superficial talking, many companions, differences of opinion, eager discussion, unconsidered assertions, words not weighed, and the like,—but it seems as if the mind were ever shedding its own better energies by a sort of radiation; as if they were ever escaping, and leaving us chilled and downcast. We find ourselves indevout, unhumbled, unhappy. Here, then, is another example of a willing spirit burdened by the weakness of our fallen nature. We have hardly come out of our keenest vigil before we are overcome with slumber.

3. I will take only one more example, and then bring this subject to an end with one or two short

remarks. This same weakness which besets our imperfect nature, is the reason why we fall so far short, in effect, of our aims and resolutions, and, in a word, of the whole law and measure of obedience. By the gift of regeneration, and by the powers of the sanctified and illuminated reason, we are able to perceive in some sort the idea of holiness as it exists in the Eternal Mind. In will and desire we choose it for our law of life. But the powers and energies of our fallen nature, even though regenerate, are too small for our aspirations. In desire we can reach to a sinless perfection of being, but in deed our purest and most elevated obedience is mingled and imperfect. This at the best; for the most part there is a sad intermingling of a baser alloy. How much of self, and sloth, and of our characteristic faults, and of secondary aims lying just below the horizon of our visible acts, is there to be found in our works of charity, our alms-deeds, our fasts, our prayers, our confessions, even at the steps of the altar. We are always resolving on more than we keep, purposing more than we do, feeling less than we say; projecting before our eyes a more perfect pattern than we ever attain; and that not only when we propose to ourselves the example of our Lord, whom none can follow in this world "whithersoever He goeth," but even of men beset like our-

selves, as His saints asleep, or His servants yet living on earth. After all, ours is a poor, flagging, swerving, laggard obedience at the best. Yet we are not only willing, but earnestly desiring, striving, and praying Him to raise us to a higher measure of obedience; and, nevertheless, ever finding our will baffled, and our acts most imperfect. I will give one instance, and then pass on. Let us take the whole branch of our personal religion which is expressed in the words "discipline" and "devotion." With our whole soul we purpose to fast, pray, watch, meditate, deny ourselves; and yet, when we look back on our habits hitherto, we shall find that we have been consciously failing, leaving things undone, coming short of our rules, changing them, seemingly for fair excuses, but really to relieve the weakness of our imperfect nature. Compare the end of Lent with its beginning, or the evening of a fast-day with the morning; set side by side your resolutions and your fulfilments, your rules and your acts; and who shall go uncondemned?

In all this, then, we see the tokens of the fall, which are still upon the regenerate. Only One was ever "tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Though He bore our manhood with its sinless infirmities, yet He hallowed and endowed it with transcendent strength. We by our regeneration are made partakers of that same hallowed

nature, not in perfection, but in imperfection; not in its fulness, but in a measure. It is in us, but made subject to the laws which control our humanity and our probation. Such is the King of saints in the midst of His brethren: He shining with full orb through heaven and earth; they in partial reflections, sometimes obscured, sometimes breaking forth, waxing and waning, yet, on the whole, ever shining "more and more unto the perfect day." We have received this great gift of God, that our "spirit is willing." There is no surer sign that we are members of His mystical body, through which the Will that moves heaven and earth, and gives laws to angels, and leads the morning stars, and out of darkness brings light, out of discord harmony, pours itself abroad, fills all the regenerate, and unites them to Himself.

In the first place, therefore, do not be out of heart at the ever-present consciousness of the weakness of your mortal nature. It is well known, and better understood, and more closely scanned by Him to whose perfection you are mystically united. If we were not fallen men, what need were there that the Word should be made flesh, and God become man, taking up the weakness of our manhood into the power of His Godhead? It is the very condition of the regenerate, and the law which governs the knitting together of His

mystical body, and the educing of a new creation out of the old, that it should be gradual; imperfection passing into perfection; death being slowly swallowed up of life, sin through long striving cast forth by holiness. Moreover, we know not what mysterious purpose in the spiritual world may be fulfilled even in our weakness; nor how the glory of the Son of God, and the abasement of sin, may be perfected in our infirmity. It was not all fulfilled when in His sinless and perfect manhood He bruised Satan under His feet: He will do more, and bruise him evermore under the feet of our weak and imperfect nature. What St. Paul said of the apostolic grace is true also of our regeneration: "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."[1] And the abasement of the powers of evil is the more absolute in this, that the weakest in God's kingdom is stronger than they. This, it may be, besides his own humiliation, was the hidden meaning of St. Paul's long buffeting with the messenger of Satan: "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."[2]

And, once more; as there seems to be some

[1] 2 Cor. iv. 7. [2] 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9.

great purpose in the permission of our weakness, so does there also appear to be as deep a design in permitting the infirmities of the saints to cleave so long and closely about them. They are ever crying to be delivered "from the body of this death," to be set free from the harrassing of indwelling evils, and to be healed of the very susceptibility of temptation. The prayer of the saints has ever been, to be "endued with much strength," to be made like to the One who was without sin. They have been going about seeking rest, crying, "'Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.' Cast out of me the unclean spirit, for I am grievously vexed with the tyranny of this self, which of a child hath tormented me. Lord, how long wilt Thou not speak the word, and heal me?"

At first sight we might be tempted to think that, as "the will of God" is "our sanctification," we could not be too speedily delivered from the infirmities of the flesh. But in this we should overlook one great reality in our present state. We must be made partakers of the humiliation of Christ; and therefore we are left girded about with the burden of our fallen nature. It is by learning the depth of our fall, and of the evil that dwells in us, that we are to be fully abased. We must "drink of the brook in the way" or ever He will "lift up" our

"head." Therefore God suffers weaknesses and infirmities to cling about His holiest servants, even as He suffers them to bear a dissolving body to the last. Great is the mystery of our humiliation; even sin, for which we are abased, is overruled to perfect our abasement; and, besides this, our faults and weaknesses are left about us for our purification. The cleansing of spiritual evil is a deep and searching work. It is not as the bleaching of a soiled garment, which is dead and passive in the fuller's hand. It is wrought by the energy and repulsion of a holy will, conscious and invincible in its warfare against itself. The pains of indwelling evil are, it may be, an absolute condition to the perfection of holiness in a fallen being. Of those blessed and holy spirits, which have ever kept their first estate, and are the nearest types of the unchangeable and Holy One, we know nothing. But for the restoration of us, fallen, and alienated, and redeemed, and born again, not a re-moulding as of dead and passive matter, but the living and intense action of a moral nature, seems ordained by the eternal laws of will and being. Our weakness and faults, therefore, are left to abide in us, that we may learn the perfection of hating what God abhors. They are as a purifying fire, which eats through us with a sleepless pain, and an anguish which cleanses the soul. When God shews to us the inner depths of our spiri-

tual being, leading us, as He led His prophet of old, through chambers hallowed to Himself, but defiled by secret abominations, He reveals to us a mystery of fear and sorrow which has nothing like it on this side of the grave. Nevertheless, let us pray of Him to shew us all. If we would be safe, we must know the worst. And this will teach us to lay our hand upon our mouth, when we are tempted to cry, "How long, O Lord?" and turn us from the rising wish "to be unclothed," and to be delivered from ourselves; because it may be that we blindly desire the shortening of our purification, with we know not what loss of glory in His kingdom. Better is it to bear about the cross of our own fallen hearts until it has wrought in us His cleansing work. Shrink from no sorrow, so it be purifying. Our soils and our sins lie so deep, they must needs be long in the refiner's fire. Pray rather that, if need be, you may be tried seven times, so that all may be clean purged out.

SERMON XVII.

SELF-OBLATION THE TRUE IDEA OF OBEDIENCE.

HEBREWS ix. 13, 14.

"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

THROUGHOUT the New Testament we are taught that our sins are forgiven through the blood-shedding of Christ; and in this epistle St. Paul shews to the Hebrew Christians how this great truth was shadowed forth in the symbolical sacrifices of the law; and how, in the self-oblation of Jesus Christ, the one true and only atoning sacrifice was offered up to God. The offerings of the law purified the flesh; the typical oblations put away ceremonial uncleanness. They could not cleanse the guilt of the conscience; they could not put away sin. For this there was needed some great spiritual reality—

something having relation to the secret laws of God's eternal kingdom, to the nature of holiness and of sin, and to the inscrutable mystery of the will, and of our reasonable being. And this was offered up by Jesus Christ, "who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God."

Now we will inquire somewhat more closely into this truth; not, indeed, that we are required to know *how* this mysterious sacrifice avails for our atonement. They that were healed by His word, or by touching the hem of His garment, or by the clay, were healed by a simple belief that there was virtue in Him to make them whole: what it was, and how it wrought, they knew not. So with the great oblation whereby our sins are expiated. The multitude of unlearned Christians, in all ages of the Church, have lived and died by faith in the blood-shedding of the Son of God, knowing nothing save that "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin." And the most illuminated of the saints have known little more of that transcendent mystery. Blessed be God, it is but a little learning we need have to enter into His kingdom; and that knowledge is rather in the will than in the understanding, and is rather gained by a quiet shining of the mind of Christ in a clear conscience than by the skill and keenness of intellectual powers.

Still there are depths into which we may see far enough to learn great truths; and those not as images of the mind only, but as great laws of life and action. We will therefore consider further, what we are taught in holy writ respecting the nature of the one great sacrifice.

St. Paul here tells us that Christ "offered up Himself." From which we may learn — First, that the act of offering was His own act; and next, that the oblation was Himself. He was both priest and sacrifice; or, in a word, the atoning oblation was His perfect obedience, both in life and in death, to the will of His Father. And this St. Paul tells us in the next chapter: "Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared me: in burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do Thy will, O God!"[1] From which we learn that the mystery of atonement began from the first act of humiliation, when He laid aside His glory, and was made in the likeness of men. It contains, therefore, His incarnation, His life of earthly obedience, His spiritual and fleshly sufferings, His death and resurrection from the dead. Throughout the whole of this lengthened course He was ever fulfilling His own prophecy —

[1] Hebrews x. 5-7.

"Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God!" In childhood, youth, and manhood; in the acts and sufferings of His humanity; in all that He did for sinners, and all that He endured at their hands; in His baptism, fasting, and temptation; in His whole obedience unto death, as well as in His death itself, the great mastery over sin was ever accomplishing. All these were so many manifestations of the perfect obedience of the will of Jesus Christ, and therefore so many masteries over the sin which has troubled the creation of God. And this is St. Paul's meaning when he says, "As by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the *righteousness* of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life: for as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the *obedience* of one shall many be made righteous."[1]

Now it is important to look at this mystery in its fullest breadth, to correct the partial, and, in so far as they are partial, the imperfect, views which are often taken of it. There is contained in the dominion of sin a fearful power of death, which could no way be overcome but by the dying of the Son of God; as St. Paul says—"By *death* He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the

[1] Rom. v. 18, 19.

devil:" our redemption is "by means of *death*:" our reconciliation "in the body of His flesh through *death*:" "Christ *died* for the ungodly:" He "*died* for our sins according to the Scriptures."[1] What death is, by what link it is indissolubly bound to sin, how the death of Jesus Christ broke that link, we know not. We know that it did so: but we know that He destroyed not death only, but sin also; and the victory over sin was wrought through a whole life, of which His death was the consummation. He overcame sin by His holiness, by perfect and perpetual obedience, by a spotless life, by His mastery in the wilderness, by His agony in the garden. There was a mysterious warfare ever going on, of which the cross was the last act, forasmuch as He "resisted unto blood, striving against sin."[2] His whole life was a part of the one sacrifice which, through the eternal Spirit, He offered to His Father, namely, the reasonable and spiritual sacrifice of a crucified will. It is important to keep this in mind, lest we fail to perceive the real nature of sin, and its true seat and energy, and thereby lose the insights which are given to us into the mystery of our justification, and the law of our justified state.

[1] Heb. ii. 14, and ix. 15. Col. i. 22. Rom. v. 6. 1 Cor. xv. 3.
[2] Heb. xii. 4.

Let us, then, consider one or two truths which follow from what has been said.

And, first; we may learn into what relation towards God the Church has been brought by the atonement of Christ. The whole mystical body is offered up to the Father, as "a kind of first-fruits of His creatures."[1] Whatsoever was fulfilled by the Head is partaken of by the body. He was an oblation, and the Church is offered up in Him. He "loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish."[2] "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in His sight."[3] The Church is gathered out of the world, and offered up to God: it is made partaker of the atonement of Christ, of the self-oblation of the Word made flesh. By union with Christ, the Church is so one with Him as to be one mystical person in body, soul, and spirit. It is in Him that we are beheld by the Father; being

[1] James i. 18. [2] Eph. v. 25-27. [3] Col. i. 22.

"accepted in the Beloved." Even now the Church is crucified, buried, raised and exalted to sit with Christ in heavenly places. In the same act of self-oblation He comprehended us, and offered us in Himself. And in this is our justification; namely, in our relation, as "a living sacrifice," to God through Christ, for whose sake we, all fallen though we be, are accounted righteous in the court of heaven.

The next truth we may learn is, the nature of the holy sacraments. Under one aspect they are gifts of spiritual grace from God to us; under another they are acts of self-oblation on our part to God. He of His sovereign will bestows on us gifts which we, trusting in His promises, offer ourselves passively to receive. As, for instance, in the baptism of adults, the candidate came, and after renouncing Satan and his kingdom, made oblation of himself, by profession of the creed, to the holy Trinity. In like manner, and even more expressively, are children dedicated to God by the office and ministry of the Church: they that bear them in their arms, and lend them speech and understanding, express a twofold act of oblation, both on the part of the parents, who thereby consecrate their offspring to God, and on the part of the child, who, through the compassion of God, is accepted as if he consciously offered up himself. And so likewise, in a more express and visible manner, in the sacrament of the

blessed eucharist; with the "creatures of bread and wine" we offer up "ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto" God. The whole order of the sacraments is expressive of self-oblation, by which we offer ourselves to God, through the atoning sacrifice of our unseen Head. They are the emphatic expressions and the efficient means of realising the great mystery of atonement in us. How important is this view of the holy sacraments, every one will at once understand, who remembers the low and shallow views which are unhappily too widely spread abroad in these latter days of the Church. It is denied that under the Gospel there are any sacrifices. They are looked upon as carnal, legal, unevangelical rites, which were abrogated at the coming of Christ. It is said, "the Church of Christ has neither sacrifices nor priesthood; the Jewish sacrifices and priesthood were types of Christ and His oblation of Himself; He being come, and His oblation perfected, these types are gone, and the antitype is in heaven." Now here, as usual, there is a great truth only half uttered. The Jewish temple, priesthood, altar, and sacrifice, were shadows of Christ. Be it so. But St. Peter tells us that we are "a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices."[1]

[1] 1 St. Peter ii. 5.

"Yes," it is answered; "but that is to be understood spiritually." To which I reply, that spiritual things are not figures, but realities; that the Jewish temple, and priesthood, and altar, and sacrifices, were types and shadows, and unrealities, because they were not spiritual; and that the Church, and priesthood, and altar, and sacrifices of Christians, are not only types, as indeed they are, of heavenly things, but antitypes; not shadows, but substances; not figures, but realities,—for this very cause, because they are spiritual; that is, ordinances and acts ordained and wrought in us by the eternal Spirit, through whom Jesus Christ "offered Himself without spot unto God." What a strange inversion of God's economies,—what a going back into the bondage of legality and Judaism, it is, to look upon the blood of bulls and of goats as real sacrifices, and on the self-oblation of the Church in the holy eucharist, through the atonement of Christ, as no sacrifice at all! As if sacrifices must of necessity be not only in part, but altogether, material; as if theirs were any thing more than sacrifices in a shadow, while ours are "in spirit and in truth." Is it not very likely that this shallow doctrine arises, as I have suggested, from the partial and imperfect view commonly taken of the one great oblation? They that dwell chiefly on the last act of suffering in the flesh,

seem naturally to fall into a lifeless and material conception of all sacrifices, whatsoever they be. They dwell on the external and material part only; forgetting that this is, so to speak, the outward and visible sign of the oblation; a part indeed, but the body or vehicle of the sacrifice, which has an inward reality in the spiritual act, and may be called the soul of the oblation. Such, for instance, is the sacrifice of the eucharist; for sacrifices are akin to sacraments, and are of a twofold nature; are partly material and partly spiritual, partly seen and partly unseen. And therefore the faithful in early times, in the very act of offering up the living sacrifice of themselves, saw in the bread and wine of the holy eucharist an expressive symbol of self-oblation, and a fulfilment of the prophet's words: "From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and *a pure offering*."[1]

I will now draw one or two inferences of a practical kind from what has been said, and then conclude.

1. We may learn from this view of the great act of atonement, what is the nature of the faith by which we become partakers of it, or, in other

[1] Mal. i. 11.

words, by which we are justified. Plainly it is not a faith which indolently terminates in a belief that Christ died for us; or which intrusively assumes to itself the office of applying to its own needs the justifying grace of the atonement. "It is God that justifieth."[1] All that faith does at the outset, in man's justification, is to receive God's sovereign gift. By our baptism we were grafted into the mystical body of Christ, which is justified through His oblation of Himself: that is, we were accounted righteous in Him—we were justified. By faith we hold fast the gift which we have received; and justifying faith conforms us to the self-sacrifice of Christ. Therefore St. Paul says, "I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."[2] And this is the meaning of his words, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me:"[3] and also of other like passages, where he speaks of our being made partakers of the cross of Christ. Justifying faith, then, is the trust of a willing heart, offered up

[1] Rom. viii. 33. [2] Rom. xii. 1. [3] Gal. ii. 20.

in obedience to God: it is His will working in us, knitting us to Himself. Perhaps in no way is the danger of a merely speculative or passive faith more exhibited than in this view; and nothing is more certain than that many, who are far removed from antinomianism in doctrine, and even hold it in abhorrence, are in danger of acquiescing in a merely passive faith: such persons, I mean, as those who live pure lives, but without self-denial; who are of a religious mind, but at peace with the world; who hold correct doctrine, but lives out of all analogy with the realities of the cross. The faith of such persons may be called merely passive; because, while it fails to constrain them to acts of self-oblation, after the example of Christ's living sacrifice, it rests itself upon a knowledge that His dying on the cross was an offering in their behalf. And hence it is we find oftentimes the most strongly expressed reliance on the death of Christian persons of a very unmortified habit of life. Men of a self-indulgent character, who live in ease and softness, taking their fill of the world's good things—of its wealth, popularity, and honours—who love high places, and delicate society, and refined pleasures, are often heard to speak with a confidence and a self-possession of the justifying power of a faith which would seem to be in no way distin-

guishable from a knowledge that Christ died for us, and a self-persuasion that, by an act of their own minds, they apply His death to their own justification. Again; it is a dubious and untrusty faith, (howsoever clear be the knowledge that Christ's death is our atonement), which is reconcileable with an ambitious life, or with a joy at succeeding or being elevated in the world, or with a watchfulness for opportunities and occasions of advancement. It is hard to believe that such men are free from strong choices, and purposes framed according to the bias of their own will, or that they are dead to the world, and partakers of the self-denial of Christ. We have need of much misgiving, when we can bear to be followed, caressed, and listened to by the world from which we are redeemed. Our faith, if we would endure unto the end, must be stern, unyielding, and severe. It must bear the impress of His passion, and make us seek the signs of our justification in the sharper tokens of His cross.

2. The next inference I will draw is this: we may thus learn what is the true point of sight from which to look at all the trials of life. We hear people perpetually lamenting, uttering passionate expressions of grief at visitations which, they say, have come on them unlooked for, and stunned

them by their suddenness: one has lost his possessions, another his health, another his powers of sight or hearing, another "the desire of his eyes," parents, children, husbands, wives, friends; each sorrowing for their own, and all alike viewing their affliction from the narrow point of their own isolated being: they seem to be hostile invasions of their peace; mutilations of the integrity of their lot; untimely disruptions of their fondest ties, and the like. Much as we speak of violent deviations of nature from her laws, and of the mysterious agencies of devastating powers; so we talk of the destruction of a fortune, the breaking up of our happiness, the wreck of our hopes. Now all this loose and faithless language arises from our not recognising the great law to which all these are to be referred. It is no more than this: that God is disposing of what has been offered up to Him in sacrifice: as, for instance, when a father or mother bewails the taking away of a child, have they not forgotten that he was not their own? Did they not offer him at the font? Did not God promise to receive their oblation? What has He done more than take them at their word? They prayed that He would make their child to be His "own child by adoption:" and He has not only heard, but fulfilled their prayer. Have they not perpetually,

since that day, asked for him the kingdom of heaven, even as the mother of Zebedee's children came and besought that her two sons might sit, the one on His right hand, and the other on His left, in His kingdom? and, like them, they knew not what they asked: they were desiring a high blessing, awful in its height; for which, if granted, they may have to go sorrowing because God has heard their prayer, and a sword has pierced through their own soul also. In an especial manner this seems true of the death of infants. They were offered up to Him, and He took them to Himself. So that they be His, who dare lament that He has chosen the place where they shall stand and minister before Him? Little, it may be, the glad mother thought, as she stood beside the font, what she was then doing; little did she forecast what was to come, or read the meaning of her own acts and prayers. And so, likewise, when any true servants of Christ are taken away, what is it but a token of His favourable acceptance of their self-oblation? They have been His from baptism, and He has granted them a long season of tarrying in this outer court of His temple. But now, at length, the time is come; and when we see them "bow the head, and give up the ghost," is it not our slowness of heart that makes even our eyes also to be holden, so as not

to see who is standing nigh, conforming them to His own great sacrifice? While they were with us, they were not ours, but His: they were permitted to abide with us, and to gladden our hearts a while; but they were living sacrifices, and ever at the point of being caught up to heaven.

And so, lastly, in all that befalls ourselves, we too are not our own, but His; all that we call ours is His; and when He takes it from us—first one loved treasure, then another, till He makes us poor, and naked, and solitary—let us not sorrow that we are stripped of all we love, but rather rejoice for that God accepts us: let us not think that we are left here, as it were, unseasonably alone, but remember that, by our bereavements, we are in part translated to the world unseen. He is calling us away, and sending on our treasures. The great law of sacrifice is embracing us, and must have its perfect work. Like Him, we must be made "perfect through suffering." Let us pray Him, therefore, to shed abroad in us the mind that was in Christ; that, our will being crucified, we may offer up ourselves to be disposed of as He sees best, whether for joy or sorrow, blessing or chastisement; to be high, or low; to be slighted, or esteemed; to be full, or to suffer need; to have many friends, or to dwell in a lonely home; to be passed by, or called to serve

Him and His kingdom in our own land, or among people of a strange tongue; to be, to go, to do, to suffer, even as He wills, even as He ordains, even as Christ endured, "who, through the Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God." Amen.

SERMON XVIII.

THE SPIRITUAL CROSS.

St. Matthew xxvii. 46.

"About the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

I have chosen these awful words, spoken in our Lord's last agony, that we may have, by the help of the Eternal Spirit through whom He offered Himself to God, a fuller and truer understanding of the depth of His bitter passion. The feelings of our lower nature so strongly draw us to dwell on the crucifixion which He suffered in the flesh, that we think too little of the mystery of His spiritual agony. And yet the pains He suffered in the body are but faint tokens of the agony He suffered in the soul. The torment of the fleshly crucifixion, unutterably great as it was, lasted for a few hours only, and for once; but His spiritual agony was at all times throughout His ministry on earth. He suffered day by day. His last sufferings in the flesh were not endured alone: they were shared

by two men like ourselves, and their fleshly pangs outlasted His. But He was suffering a twofold crucifixion. His cross was, as it were, a sacrament of sorrows, having an outward and an inward anguish. Our eyes fasten on the material cross, the outward and earthlier, the more human portion of His sufferings: but His intenser agonies were all within; his keenest anguish was the spiritual cross: and this is what we will now for a while consider.

In these words of the twenty-second Psalm, it is plain that He spoke of more than His agonising death. They were no doubt in part wrung from Him by the torment of His wounded body; but they have a deeper meaning. This forsaking was manifestly one of a more awful and oppressive kind. Of such a holy mystery it is hard to speak without seeming to be guilty of an over-boldness, which makes our thoughts sound like irreverence: it is a depth rather to be mused over than to be spoken of: so that when we hear our own thoughts aloud, they seem almost more than we designed to venture on.

Let us, then, consider the nature of His spiritual cross. It was the being brought under all the conditions of a sinner, though Himself without sin. Sin tried upon Him all its powers; first to lure, afterwards to destroy. As, for instance:

1. He was tempted by direct suggestions of evil.

We read that He "was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil." It was a foremost part of His warfare with the powers of spiritual wickedness. All before Him had sinned. Satan had won his masteries over all. The first man Adam, the patriarchs, prophets, and saints, all God's earthly servants in their day had sinned. Hitherto the prince of this world had triumphed, carrying all before him. But now was manifested one more servant of God, with whom the whole contest lay. He was brought into the world as the leader and prince of saints; and all powers of evil thronged about Him. How far the true mystery of His person was known, is not revealed to us: but we find the tempter saying, "If thou be the Son of God," plainly shewing that he knew at least the name of Jesus. Be this as it may, all powers of evil gathered upon Him, and strove with Him. He was assailed with a temptation to mistrust His heavenly Father, to be vainly confident of God's protection, to forego His own allegiance and homage for a mighty bribe. All these suggestions of evil were made to pass vividly before His spiritual consciousness; and who shall conceive the pangs of such a trial? The lures of sin are hateful just in the measure of the holiness of him that is tempted. A sinner has no distress in the worst solicitations of evil; even though resisted, it is not the solicitation,

but the self-denial that grieves and galls him. A holy man has bitterness in his very soul at the consciousness of being tempted, and, in resisting, is refreshed by a sense of mastery; but the conception of evil in his heart is full of shame and sorrow. And so to the end of life; as men grow in holiness, they grow in a keen sensitiveness of soul which makes temptation all but intolerable. But with the Holy One, who can express the affliction of being the direct subject of temptation? To hate evil as God hates it, and to be tempted as man is tempted, is a humiliation and a sorrow, as of iron entering into the soul. Surely all the after-assaults of spiritual wickedness to destroy His life were as nothing, compared to the awful mystery of being addressed by the allurements of sin. These approaches of the wicked one were made to the will of the Son of God, with the design of withdrawing the consent of His pure soul from His heavenly Father. They were a thousand-fold more hateful and harrowing than the falsehood of His suborned accusers, or the scourging of His sinless flesh.

2. Again; He suffered a perpetual unmingled sorrow for the sins of men. All the day long He was the mark of their gainsaying and contradiction. Every form of falsehood, unfair dealing, misinterpretation, insidious address, malignant slander, were heaped upon Him. All around Him He

beheld a conscious resistance of the light of truth. Very keen is the suffering of false construction from deaf and prejudiced hearts. We know little of it; but that little is enough. There is an unreasonableness about minds heated into opposition which nothing can allay; and minds otherwise not corrupt pass on into obstinate and sinful perversity. All this He suffered so as never man endured before. The lawyers stood up and questioned, tempting Him; the Pharisees and Herodians sought to entangle Him in His talk; others watched His words, that they might find wherein to accuse Him. They gave to His words such refined perversions of meaning, as are manifold more cutting than the blackest falsehood. Slander is characteristically devilish. They reviled Him for the works which they could not deny. "He casteth out devils by Beelzebub the prince of the devils." "Say we not well, that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" Very little can we conceive of this bitter sorrow; for in Him it was dashed with a far bitterer taste of which we can know still less. The sorest and most hateful part of this contradiction was the ingratitude of man. With the full foresight of all He should suffer for their sakes, and the consciousness that all He then suffered was for their salvation, He bore at their hands all manner of wrong and subtilty. And to this sense

of their ingratitude was joined a knowledge of their self-destruction. Sad and woful sight in the eyes of Him by whom all things were made, to see mankind, God's chiefest creature in this visible world, marred from its original holiness, "earthly, sensual, devilish." To Him the depths of this alienation were ever open; He saw the world of enmity against God which had entered the soul of man. And doubtless as He read the whole outline of the fall, in each sinner that reviled, or lay in wait to ensnare Him, so did He look on to the working out of the mystery of iniquity in the new creation of God. "Have I not chosen you twelve? and one of you is a devil." Surely the sin of Judas sat upon His heart before that last hour, when He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." He carried about with Him the daily burden of the foreseen sins of His enemies and of His friends. All the awful guilt of His last passion, the betrayal, the false judgment, the impious mockery, the scourge, the cross, the self-accursing cry of God's apostate people, were all foretasted; and surely the forsaking of His Apostles, and the denial of Peter, were not veiled from His sight. And He that afterwards, in the isle of Patmos, unfolded before the eyes of St. John the stream of the world's history, and the fortunes of His Church in the world, daily foresaw all things that

should come hereafter. The sin of the world, and, worse than all, the sin of His Church, lay heavily upon Him day by day. Shall we not believe that the schisms, and strife, and mutual conflict of Churches, the dying out of light, the darkening of truth, the growth of false traditions, the falling away of the latter times, and all the chequered train of these eighteen hundred years, were all before His sight in whom dwelt "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily?" Sin in all its mysteries of origin, and depth, and breadth, and all its masteries, even to the end of the world, were spread before Him who was by peculiar title, "the Man of Sorrows;" "the Lamb that taketh away the sin of the world." And as He said to the women that bewailed Him, when He was led away to Calvary, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me; but weep for yourselves and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?"[1]—so doubtless the destinies of His Church on earth stood like a lowering horizon behind the mount of crucifixion. The rents and

[1] St. Luke xxiii. 28-31.

wounds of His mystical body already pierced His spirit; and the false kiss which the world should give, to the betrayal of His Church; and the afflictions of His saints, and the tyranny of the strong, and the pampered self-pleasing of soft spirits, and the plagues of worldliness, and the foreseen apostacy of the latter days,—all these dwelt heavily on Him to whom all things to come are as things that are.

3. And, once more; He suffered, throughout we know not how large a portion of His whole life, the natural fear of death and of His coming agony. It is strange that, while we dwell chiefly on the thought of His fleshly crucifixion, we so hastily pass by these natural affections of our manhood wherewith He was encompassed. In His lifetime we forget His fleshly nature in His spiritual; at His death we forget His spiritual in His fleshly. Now it is plain that His whole life, so far as revealed to us in the Gospel, was full of a sad and afflicting foresight of the cup which His Father should give Him; therefore He was wont to say, "Mine hour is not yet come;" and therefore He spoke of "the sign of the prophet Jonas;" and of His lifting up. The fear of death is one of the sinless infirmities of our manhood; and this He bare no less than thirst or hunger. We know with what a piercing strength the first glimpses of a coming sorrow shoot in upon us: how they

chequer our whole life, and overshadow all things; how sad thoughts glance off from all we do, or say, or listen to; how the mind converts every thing into its own feeling and master-thought. Even the smallest things in life have great capacities of sorrow, and hold great measures of sadness. It is not only on the greater and more set occasions that our afflictions overwhelm us. Perhaps our keenest sufferings are in sudden recollections, remote associations, indirect hints, words, tones, little acts of unconscious friends. And even so it was with Him. It was not only when Moses and Elias, in the mount of the transfiguration, allayed the brightness of His glory by speaking of "the decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem," but in all the lesser events of life His coming agony rose up before Him. When a lowly woman anointed Him with ointment, He saw in it the preparations of the grave: "She hath anointed my body to the burying." The very spikenard had in it the savour of death. "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptised with the baptism that I am baptised with?" "I have a baptism to be baptised withal, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" And, as the time drew nigh, this sinless shrinking of our manhood from the agonies of His passion was more clearly manifested. He grew, if I may so speak, fuller of the thought,

and began to teach His disciples how many things He must suffer;[1] foretelling every step of His last afflictions, from His betrayal to His cross: and when the hour was come, He was straitened with a sinless impatience for its accomplishment; and He bade the traitor to do His work with a friendly speed: "What thou doest do quickly:" and afterwards in the garden, when He had said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death,"[2] who shall venture to imagine what were His hidden agonies; what it was that thrice wrung from Him, even after the act of self-oblation, "Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me;" what visions, it may be, of the cup and of the cross were held out to Him; how He wrestled, until by a direct consent, and choice of the will, He drank it, in foretaste, to the dregs? As yet His fleshly crucifixion had not begun. It was His spiritual cross; the sharp inward wounding of the soul, that crucified even the body before its time, and impressed its passion upon His earthlier nature. "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood, falling down to the ground."[3]

4. And, as the chief of all His sorrows, He suffered we know not what darkness of soul upon the cross. True it is, that the Holy One of God, even when most beset by afflictions from without,

[1] St. Matt. xvi. 21, and xx. 18, 19.
[2] St. Matt. xxvi. 38. [3] St. Luke xxii. 44.

was calm and illuminated within. The rays of His Father's face shone secretly in upon Him. To Him, as to all saints of God, all the avenues of heaven were open. The pure lights and soft dews of His Father's kingdom were His continual refreshment. It was not for His own sake that He endured a darkness of soul; neither for His own sake did He hunger, or thirst, or become man, or die: so, likewise, whatsoever mysterious desolation of heart came upon Him, He endured as the Saviour of sinners. He was "made sin for us." He was made to know the wages of sin, even as sinners must needs know it; and desolation of soul, and the forsaking of the light of God's countenance, is our portion in the lot of sinners: and this He suffered even as He suffered the scourge and the crown of thorns. It may be that, as soul and body were afterwards separated, so the shining of His Father's face was for a time concealed. He learned the full misery of fallen man. Of all His passion we know but a little part: His "unknown sufferings" were beyond them all: of them we can know nothing. We can gather them only from His own words, few and broken, when He was passing through His hidden agonies: "If it be possible," and "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" But, what death is: what shall be after death: what, in the hour of passing, is the world which lies between

the sinner's soul and God: to what mysterious nearness of conformity to the doom of a transgressor He humbled Himself for our redemption from death and hell, is not revealed: all this, whatsoever it be, He suffered: but we are speaking of what we know not.

This, then, is a dim outline of His spiritual cross. The visible sufferings on Calvary were the filling up of His afflictions, and the symbol or revelation of His hidden agonies: and it was in these that the full mastery over sin was chiefly won. The body, though a partaker both in sin and death, is not the chief either in the transgression or the penalty, but the spirit of man. It was on his spiritual nature that God's image was stamped in the beginning; and through the power of that spiritual being he became a rebel against God. The soul was the seat of the rebellion; there it was that the powers of spiritual wickedness erected their dominion; and in that same region of His being, the Man who alone was without sin, suffered all the penalty which sin had drawn upon the world. In a word, what pain is to the body, sorrow is to the soul; and the scourge, the crown of thorns, and the cross, are, as it were, a parable of bitterness, anguish, and affliction.

Now from all this we may understand what that cross is of which all must be partakers: not

the visible material cross, but that which is more real than the reality of fleshly crucifixion. It is not so much by sufferings in the body as in the spirit, that we are likened to Him. The railing thief was more nearly conformed to His visible passion than all, save one or two, in all the multitude of saints. Yet, though conformed to Him in the flesh, he was not likened to Him in spirit. St. John and the blessed Virgin did not suffer indeed in the flesh, yet were they truly nailed with Him upon His cross. So in all ages of the Church, kings and princes, no less than bishops and pastors of His flock, not only in sackcloth and solitude, but in soft clothing and in the throng of royal courts, have borne the marks of the Lord Jesus, and shared the reality of His passion. Weak women too, moving in silence and a veil, unseen of the world, and never breathed on by its rough oppositions, have both carried their cross with Him, and on it hung beside Him. They have died with Him in will, and in sacrifice of self; in mortifying the choices and affections of their earthlier nature; in a glad forsaking of bright hopes and fair promises in life, sitting at His feet without distraction, and bearing withal a burden of many sorrows, partly the awful tokens of their Master's love, and partly laid upon them by the wrong and enmity of the world. Among many samples, let this one suf-

fice. We read in the life of one to whom was meted out a death-sickness of uncommon anguish, that as she drew near the end, for a long season she was uncheered by the divine consolations which were the wonted stay of her soul. She complained in sadness to her spiritual guide of this strange and appalling desolation, until she learned to read in it the gift of a higher measure of conformity to Him, who in His last passion cried aloud, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" In like manner there is many a sorrow fearfully hidden from the world's hard gaze, many an overlooked affliction, many a piercing of heart by the lesser sharpnesses of our common griefs, which not the less, when borne in silence for God, make the mourning spirit to partake of His mysterious cross.

There is one more truth that we may learn from what has been said. I mean, what necessity there is that all should thus be crucified with Him. Sin is an inward and unseen malady: though manifested in act, its origin and being is in the spirit. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts;" therefore its overthrow must be by an inward mastery: and this is to be won only by suffering the buffetings of sin, rather than yield to its dominion. The strife is within a man. It is by a patient wrestling with temptation; by a sharp rule over our own temper; by a life of high and severe fellowship

with Christ, that we must be likened to Him. There is no smoother, no other way of eternal life. Let this be a warning to all sinful and shallow Christians; to all easy, formal, exterior minds; and to the worldly, self-sparing, and light-hearted. They that have no fellowship with the Man of Sorrows have no share of His cross, no promise of His crown. Let this be also a consolation for all the blessed company of the sorrowful; for all who, with a pricked or broken heart, are moving upward against the stream of this visible world, which bears down in a heavy tide away from God. They must be buffeted by it, or be borne along with it. But all this is likening them to the Lord of sufferings, and making them partakers of His sorrow. In a little time all will be over. It is sharp and piercing, but it cleanses and purifies; it moulds and draws the spirit into the form of the Son of God; it puts in the sharper lines and the deeper colouring; it is as the shadow of His crown of thorns. Blessed are they that have entered into the company of mourners: life has nothing more for them either to hope or fear; they linger on in this visible world, but their true life is in the world unseen. Blessed lot! how calm, how even, how unmoved! all has been suffered; they are "afraid of no evil tidings," of no new and sudden strokes; all is known. No joy nor sorrow now can shake them from their

rest. They are of his fellowship who said, "Henceforth let no man trouble me; for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."[1]

[1] Gal. vi. 17.

SERMON XIX.

THE HIDDEN POWER OF CHRIST'S PASSION.

St. John xii. 32.

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me."

Our blessed Lord here reveals the great end of all His holy passion. He was lifted up from the earth, nailed upon the tree, that He might draw all men, from all nations, both Jews and Gentiles, to Himself. By His precious blood-shedding, He took away the sin of the world; and by the mighty virtues of that one great sacrifice, He has been gathering together again in one body the children of God who are scattered abroad.

First, then, in these words He foretells the gathering out and knitting together of His mystical body, which is the Church. From the time of His ascension into heaven, and the shedding abroad of the Holy Ghost, He has been working unseen upon the spirits of mankind; He has been drawing together the living stones of His

spiritual house; by the apostolic priesthood, by preaching, by His holy sacraments, by the interweaving of His providential government with the currents of man's will, and by all the wonderful changes in the tides of two thousand years; by the movements of the reason of man, and by what men call the civilisation of the world; by the rise and fall of empires, and the organised system of human polities. He has thus been working out this great all-comprehending aim—the perfection of His Church. First He drew a remnant of the Jews to the foot of His mystical cross: then to them he drew the Gentiles, first proselytes, then they that before were "strangers from the covenants of promise:" laying thereby in all the world the first foundations of the Catholic Church: and then into that same area He drew people unknown before by name; and, as they entered into the holy precinct, they put off their old natures—they came in as conquerors, and then dwelt in it as conquered. They were taken in a snare, and were subdued by the power they had seemed to overthrow. And thenceforward in all ages of the Church, He has wrought, through the sacramental power of its visible polity, upon the multitude of nations, drawing them together into the bond of peace; drawing them upward to higher movements of spiritual life; building up His temple, not

only in the majesty of its lofty stature, but in the glory and perfection of its parts. There has been not a change, but a growth: as the springing or unfolding of a stately tree; a growth, not only of bulk, but of beauty; ever opening itself to the drawings and invitations of a gentle sky: so His mystical body has grown from childhood to youth and manhood, throwing out new powers of illuminated reason and of regenerate will, ever advancing "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

But this subject is too large for our present thoughts; and therefore I will not follow any further the mysterious economy by which He, through His Church, draws nations to Himself, and the whole body of His people to perfection. We will confine our thoughts to a more particular form of this great work of mercy; I mean, the way in which, in His Church, He draws men one by one unto Himself. Christ is in the midst of His Church. His eye and His hand have been upon us from the hour of our baptism. He is ever drawing us by His unseen virtues: we are all around Him, some nearer, some further off; some approaching, some receding from Him. There is a work going on, of which the day of judgment is only the end and summing up. There is between those that follow and those that resist is drawings, a real separation even

now. "His fan is in His hand; and He will thoroughly purge His floor, and gather the wheat into His garner, but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." With those, however, that resist His gracious drawings I have nothing now to do. Let us speak only of those who are approaching, be it never so slowly and far off, the foot of the spiritual cross; and of these I pass by penitents, and the first and imperfect forms of a character under the power of its second regeneration, as repentance was wont to be called; because in His sight we are all penitents, and because the degrees of such characters are infinite, and because they will be ultimately included in the more general forms, of which we shall speak hereafter.

He is, I say, in the midst of His Church, and we are ranged around Him in many measures of approach, as if we were in the many courts or precincts which surround His eternal throne.

First, and farthest off, among the better kind, are blameless and amiable people; against whom no greater charge can be laid, than that they are harmless unemphatic Christians: there is nothing high or deep about them—nothing that has any meaning below the surface of their life. They have no great measure of devotion, and of contemplation still less; they want awe and reverence, because they lack a consciousness of things unseen.

And hence their characters are shallow and disappointing: they raise, and dash, your hopes of them in turn: they fall short both of your expectations and of their own resolutions. It seems as if their nature were incapable of taking a sharp and true impression. They mix in the world, and are highly esteemed, because they are amiable; but no man is awed by them; for, after all, they are poor characters. Now even such as these are ever drawing nearer to Him; but their slight retrogressions are so many, and their advance so slow, that it is imperceptible. By measuring together large periods of their life, the change may be detected: on a death-bed it is perhaps seen more plainly. But there is an original fault about them in some region of their spiritual life; something which retards their advance, and ever keeps them back. Of such men it is hard to know what we shall say.

Again; there are those who, to all that I have described, add further, an inward conformity in many lesser features to the mind of Christ. They have feeling and zeal, and are visibly and sensibly religious; so much so, as to bear at least a shadow of the cross for His name's sake. They love the meditative parts of religion, the poetry and imagery of faith, and the consolations of Christianity. They have, unawares, gone so deep into religion, that

they cannot go back. They cannot do without it; and onward they must go. Yet they are not near enough to Him to be at rest. Still they are afraid of going too near, and trusting Him wholly. There is much in them which would be precipitated, as it were, by a closer approach to Him; and they are not yet willing to forego it. Nevertheless, they often pray for this; and are convinced that He, and He only, is enough so to fill all their heart, that if they had His presence, they should want nothing more. Such men are good Christians, but hardly saints; for that word has a deeper sense than they as yet can bear. There are too many reserved affections, and hopes, and wishes, yet clinging to them. But He will not let them rest where they are; unless, indeed, they wilfully go back from Him. He was lifted up from the earth for this very cause, that He might draw them still onward, nearer to Himself. He loves them too well to let them linger afar off; and therefore we find such people ever passing on, one by one, often unwillingly and with half a heart, drawing nigh as by the compulsion of angels' hands, until they enter another circle of approach to Him. There is a higher fellowship, to which they are destined.

For there are those who are the true elect; the elect of the elect; the Christians indeed; the chosen ones, with whom is "the white stone," and

"the hidden manna," and "the secret of the Lord," and the "new name which no man knoweth, saving he that receiveth it." On them the voice of Christ fell in childhood, when the soul answered as the pure tide swelling to the silent moon; or in riper years, it may be in the threshold of life, or in after-life, under some cloud and chill of heart; and they heard it, and were for a long while amazed, as Samuel, at the thrilling sound, knowing neither who spake, nor what to answer. Yet it pierced their heart, and they felt it could not stop there. Why, they knew not: but they knew within themselves that they could never have peace till they had heard that voice again. They feel that they must hear it more closely and more clearly, and know the meaning of the voice. Afterwards, at strange and unlooked-for times, they have caught, little by little, the will of Him that spake: more, as it were, from the meaning of the tone, than from any articulate words. And they have followed Him in silence, not knowing whither, saying deeply to themselves, I must go on. And they have felt a change passing on them, as from a chill to warmth, like men coming up out of a grave into the noon-day sun. And this mild guiding power has drawn them from faults, and from weaknesses, and from vain hankerings, and from the world: and they have begun, as it were, to live anew — more thoughtfully, but more happily; and

they verily thought the work was done. Alas for them! the greatest work was yet to be begun. They were still living in themselves: self, with its hopes, and promises, and dreams, had still hold of them; but He had begun to fulfil their prayers. They had asked for contrition, and He sent them sorrow; they had asked for purity, and He sent them a thrilling anguish; they had asked to be meek, and He had broken their heart; they had asked to be dead to the world, and He slew all their living hopes; they had asked to be made like unto Him, and He began to make them "perfect through sufferings;" they had asked to lay hold of His cross, and when He reached it out to them, it cut their hands; they had asked, they knew not what, nor how, but He had taken them at their word, and granted all their petitions. They were hardly willing to follow on so far, or to draw so nigh to Him. They had upon them an awe and a fear, as Jacob at Bethel, and as Eliphaz in the night-visions; or as the apostles, when they "thought that they had seen a spirit," and "knew not that it was Jesus." They were not ready to give up so much, to make so great a surrender of self, to forego so many things which He permits others to enjoy, which they take as a matter of course, almost of necessity. The change in life was too searching and too deep. They felt in a perplexity.

If they should draw back, they could never be happy again; and yet they feared His nearness. They could almost pray Him to depart from them, or to hide His awfulness. They find it easier to obey Him than to suffer; to do than to give up; to bear the cross than to hang upon it. They have found His service growing year by year more blessed, but more awful; dearer to them, but more searching; more full of heaven, but more exacting. Little did they know to what they pledged themselves, when, in that first season of awe, they arose and followed His voice. But now they cannot go back; for they are too nigh to the unseen cross, and its virtues have pierced too deeply within them. Day by day they are giving up their old waking dreams; things they have pictured out, and acted over, in their imaginations and their hopes; one by one they let them go, with saddened but willing hearts. They feel as if they had fallen under some irresistible attraction, which is hurrying them into the world unseen: and so in truth it is; He is fulfilling to them His promise, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Their turn is come at last: that is all. Before, they had only heard of the mystery; now, they feel it. He has fastened on them His look of love, even as on Peter and on Mary; and they cannot choose but follow, and in following Him

altogether forget both themselves and all their visions of life. Little by little, from time to time, by fleeting gleams, the mystery of His spiritual cross shines out upon them. They behold Him high and lifted up, and the glory which rays forth from the wounds of His holy passion; and as they gaze upon it, they adore, and are changed into His likeness; and His mind shines out through them, for He dwells in them. They live alone with Him, in high and unspeakable fellowship; willing and glad to lack what others over-enjoy; to be unlike all, so that they are only like to Him. Such were the apostles; such in all ages were they who now follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Had they chosen for themselves, or their friends for them, they would have chosen otherwise. They would have been brighter here, but less glorious in His kingdom; they would have had Lot's portion, not Abraham's; would have been full of happiness and of anxieties, of lower blessings and heavier burdens. If they had halted any where; if He had taken off His hand, and let them hang back, as they often yearned to do, what would they not have lost; what forfeits in the morning of the resurrection! But He stayed them up even against themselves. Many a time their "foot had well nigh slipped;" but He in His mercy held them up. And now, even in this life, they know that

all He did was done well; that it was good for them to stand alone with Him upon the mountain and in the cloud; and that not their own will, but His was done in them.

This, then, is the work which He has been doing with each one of you. Little as you may know it, your whole life, from baptism to this day, is a parable, of which this is the key. Even with the sinful, and the enemies of His cross, He has been dealing in tenderness and long-suffering. He has been striving to draw them to His cross, while they have been wrestling against Him. Fearful thought, that a man should be in open warfare against the will and work of Christ, baffling by a stubborn heart the great mystery of His passion! "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker: let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth;"[1] but woe thrice told to him that striveth with his Saviour: "He that falleth on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder."[2]

All of you has He been drawing; and if you look back, you can see the links in the chain which has drawn you until now. A word, a thought, a chance, a sickness, a sorrow, a desolation of heart in the day-time, or a dream of the past in the night-season, alone, or in the throng of men, in

[1] Isaiah xlv. 9. [2] St. Matt. xxi. 44.

your chamber, or at the altar, something pierced deep into your soul, and there abode; and you carried it about like a barbed arrow, which no hand could draw but the same that launched it. And then He has led you, little by little, with gentle steps, hiding the full length of the way that you must tread, lest you should start aside in fear, and faint for weariness. And as it has been, so it must be: onward you must go: He will not leave you here: there is yet in store for you more contrition, more devotion, more delight in Him. A few years hence, and you will see how true these words are. If by that time you have not forsaken Him, you will be nigher still, walking in strange, it may be solitary paths, in ways that are "called desert;" but knowing Him, as now you know Him not, with a fulness of knowledge, and a bowing of heart, and a holy self-renouncement, and a joy that you are altogether His. What now seems too much, shall then seem all too little; what too nigh, not nigh enough to His awful cross. Oh, how our thoughts change! A few years ago, and you would have thought your present state excessive and severe; you would have shrunk from it then, as at this time you shrink from the hereafter. But now you look back, and know that all was well. In all your past life you would not have one grief the less, or

one joy the more. It is all well; though, when it happened, you knew it not. "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." Therefore shun all things which may hinder your approach to Him: follow His drawings with a free and willing heart. Though restless and perplexed at first, yield to His mysterious will; even as Peter, who first strove with Him, and then said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."[1] Wait for the end. Men mar their whole destiny in life by prescribing to God's providence. They either thwart it by outrunning it, or hinder it by hanging back. What we are to be He has determined, and in due time will reveal it. Your place, your crown, your ministry, in His unseen kingdom, are all marked out for you. He is drawing you towards your everlasting portion. At that day, when He shall have brought unto Mount Sion the last of His redeemed flock, and every lost sheep shall "pass under the hand of him that telleth them;" when the mystical number shall be full; and all the saints of God, from Abel the righteous to the last that shall be quick on earth at His coming, shall be gathered round the Lamb that was slain, then shall we know what He is now doing with us under a veil and in silence. We shall no more follow Him unseen; but behold Him face to face.

[1] St. John xiii. 7 and 9.

SERMON XX.

SUFFERING THE SCHOOL OF OBEDIENCE.

HEBREWS v. 8.

"Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."

ALTHOUGH we are taught that the godhead and manhood were so united in the person of our blessed Lord as to be absolutely one, there yet remains unrevealed a wonderful mystery respecting the conditions of His human nature; as, for instance, where He said of His second coming, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man; no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father."[1] How did He not know? How should any thing be hidden from "the Son of Man, which is in heaven?"[2] All that we can say is, that in these words He declared to us that the mystery of His incarnation was in some way ordered by the laws and conditions of our manhood. We have another example of this kind in the text: St. Paul

[1] St. Mark xiii. 32. [2] St. John iii. 13.

here tells us that Christ Himself "learned obedience by the things which He suffered."

And, first, this may be understood of the passive nature which He assumed into His divine person, by taking upon Himself our humanity. As God He was impassible, immortal, incapable of being tempted by evil; infinite, and therefore unchangeable: neither growth, nor weariness, nor faintness, nor thirst, nor hunger, could reach the Eternal. He was above the conditions of a creature; but by the mystery of His incarnation, what things before could not reach or fasten upon His divine nature, were admitted to His manhood. He, therefore, took on Him our flesh and blood, that He might come under the dominion of suffering and mortality, of spiritual warfare and bodily infirmities. As He assumed the passive conditions of humanity, so He partook of the susceptibilities of its several ages. And therefore we read that "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."[1] And these words are no mere economy or condescension, as when we read of God's repenting, or of awaking, or plucking His right hand out of His bosom; but deep mysterious realities, as plainly to be taken and understood as the Word being made flesh, and weeping at the grave of Lazarus, and

[1] St. Luke ii. 52.

being nailed upon the cross. Such, then, was the humiliation of the Eternal Son. He was made man, not only to suffer, but to learn; He assumed the imperfections of His creatures, and "compassed" Himself "with infirmity;" that, as before there was nothing in Godhead which was not in Him, so afterward there was nothing in manhood, sin only excepted, of which He did not partake. It is plain, then, that He "learned obedience" in the very truth of our nature, even as we learn it; that is, by measure and degrees, and by discipline, and in time.

And this brings us to one more truth. There are different ways both of knowing and of learning. A large part of our knowledge is either intuitive and ideal, residing in the pure reason; or speculative, that is, gathered by deduction and mental inference: and this is one kind of knowledge, and one way of learning. Another kind is learned by what we call life; by experience, personal trial, entanglement with events, struggles in doing and suffering: and what we learn in this way, we know with a depth and familiarity far beyond all other knowledge; it is a part of our living energies and powers, and dwells in our very being. Not only is its stamp imprinted on us, but it so passes into us as to blend with our whole inner nature. We *are* what we have done and suffered.

And this is what we commonly call "experience." Now, if we consider that the impassible Word took on Him our passible nature, we shall see in what sense even He "learned obedience by the things that He suffered." As there is a difference in kind between the knowledge we possess of those things which we have, and those things which we have not learned by experience; so the same is true also of His perfect manhood; and more visibly true of the knowledge of an omniscient impassible Being compared with the experience of suffering humanity. It is a mode and kind of knowledge which could not otherwise consist with the perfections of the Godhead.

He made trial, then, in a passible nature, of human suffering. He learned, by actual partaking of sorrow, what is the power of sin over mankind. Into His pure manhood the guilt of sin could no more enter than into His eternal Godhead: but the sinless infirmities of our fallen state, and its large capacities of agony, He took; and, girded about with them, He offered Himself to the strife of evil. He obeyed, in that He stood in the place of a sufferer. And in it He learned in very deed, by feeling and tasting, the nakedness and the bitterness of the fall of man. What was impossible to the Godhead, He as man endured in the wilderness, suffering the suggestions and solici-

tations of the Evil One; so likewise in the garden, He passed through an agony which cannot be uttered; there lay on Him a crushing burden of fleshly and spiritual woes, the like of which never man yet bare. In the betrayal, and in the judgment before Annas, and Caiaphas, and Herod, and Pilate, and by the way-side, and in the ascent of Calvary, and upon the cross, He learned a mystery of suffering, of pangs and agony, such as no son of man had ever known. Into all this the Eternal Word entered, through His passive nature as man. Strange words, yet most true, though so awful to the ear as almost to make us fear to speak them. He that suffered the rack of the spiritual cross, and the unutterable torments of bodily pain, was God. He to whom all mysteries lie open as the light of noon, learned, by the things which He suffered, what as God He could never taste. Through that life, short in days, but in sorrows above all measure long, through humiliation, and peril, and contempt, and cold, and fasting, and weariness, and thirst, and hunger, and faintness, and ingratitude, and contradiction of sinners, and treachery, and false-witness, and unjust condemnation, and buffetting, and spitting, and mockery, and the smiting of the reed, and the crown of thorns, and the vinegar and gall, and the rending cross, and the hiding of His Father's

face,—He the Eternal, the Word of God, the everlasting Son of the Father, learned the mystery of suffering. What, then, was it that He learned? St. Paul says, *obedience:* that is, by trial, and discipline, and self-denial, He took the will of His Father for His own. All the assaults of the tempter, whether by allurement or by buffettings, could not move Him from His loyalty; all the long lingering daily toil, and all the piercing agonies of His passion, could not withdraw so much as a thought of His heart from His Father's will. Even though He, the great and true Melchisedec, "in the days of His flesh," made oblation[1] of "prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared;"[2] yet the prayer of His heart was, "not My will, but Thine be done:" and He was heard, yet not so that the cup should pass, but that His will should yield to His Father's, and become one with it. This, then, He learned even as we: as He hungered like us, and wept like us, so, by trial and discipline, He learned to bear the conditions of our suffering manhood. All through His humiliation, He was realising, by actual energy and patience, the pledge He gave of old: "Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God."

[1] προσενέγκας. [2] Heb. v. 7.

And in thus learning obedience, He learned also to enter by sympathy into the sorrows of those that suffer: "We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."[1] For in that "He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are tempted."[2] All divine as He was before, and therefore infinite in love and pity, He has yet condescended further to our fallen state, and interposed, between His eternal mercies and our imperfect being, the tender sympathy of His own crucified humanity; as if it were not enough that He should pity us "like as a father pitieth his children," but that He must feel with us in our sorrows even as one of ourselves. And for this cause He suffered, that He might learn to sympathise with those that suffer through obedience. He has made full trial of all; there is no posture of the afflicted soul with which He is not familiar; no measure of bodily or spiritual sorrow which, "in the days of His flesh," He endured not to the uttermost; and what He endured in the weakness of humanity, passed into the depths of His divine compassion.

Though He was God, yet was there something still to be learned for our sakes; though He was a

[1] Heb. iv. 15. [2] Heb. ii. 18.

Son, yet were there deeper mysteries of obedience which He must needs learn through suffering. All holy even as man, altogether obedient to His Father's will, yet, by some law which governs the realities of the spiritual world, there were deep things lying hid in the nature of sorrow and pain, and in the energy and patience of the will, which were yet to be learned by warfare and by agony; and for this end He was made flesh, and bowed Himself to the cross of our humiliation; and was made not only like us, but one with us; so that it was our mingled and sensitive being which in Him suffered, and was taught and disciplined in the relation of a creature to his God, and of a sinner to his righteous Judge.

Now there is one broad and obvious truth flowing from what has been said: namely, that suffering is the school or discipline of obedience. In His wisdom and power, God has laid even upon sorrow the destiny of fulfilling His purposes of mercy. In the beginning, sorrow was the wages of sin, penal and working death; by the law of Christ's redemption it is become a discipline of cleansing and perfection. God permits it still to abide in His kingdom, but He has reduced it to subjection. It is now changed to be a minister, not more of His severity than of His mercy. To the impenitent, and such as will not obey the truth, it is still, as

ever, a dark and crushing penalty: to the contrite and obedient, it is as the refiner's fire, keen and searching, purging out the soils, and perfecting the renewal of our spiritual nature. It is the discipline of saints, and the surest, though the sharpest, school of sanctity; and that because suffering, or, as we are wont to say, trial, turns our knowledge into reality. God has many ways of teaching us; and from our childhood we are ever learning, from parents, and teachers, and sermons, and books; from the holy Scriptures and the sacraments of the Church, and from the changes and chances of the world: all these form the habit of obedience in faithful minds. But a season of suffering is beyond them all. When pain searches into the body or the spirit, we feel as if we had awoke up to know that we had learned nothing really until then. There is laid upon us a mighty hand, from whose shadow we cannot flee. All general truths teem with a particular meaning, and speak to us with a piercing emphasis. God is come nigh to us, and is dealing with us at last, one by one. It is our turn now: and we feel as if we saw the tokens of His presence shaping themselves for a moment to our sight, and then withdrawing themselves again; coming and going in an awful way, as if to gaze upon us, and search out our very thoughts: we feel as if the prophet's words were

in some way true of ourselves: "In the year that king Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple."[1] Something is before the eye of the soul: what it is as yet we cannot clearly see: but we are conscious that we are brought in contact with the order of the eternal world; and that God has turned His hand upon us, to make us meet for His kingdom; that henceforward it is most likely that our trials will follow quickly, one upon another; and that there is no other rest in store for us until we put off this body, and pass into the realities of the world unseen. Such are the effects wrought by sorrows, sicknesses, bodily pains, cutting anxieties, and the like. They seem to take away the imaginative and visionary parts of our life, and to turn it into a severe and impressive reality: they make all our past life appear as a mere day-dream, as if we had never been in earnest till now. We have heard of submission, and resignation, and giving up of our own will; but it has been as yet little more than hearsay. At last we find these things required at our hands. We must give more than words now: God is exacting realities. And then there comes down upon the mind, as it were, a full stream of words and sayings, which we have heard or read in time past, and only half understood, and

[1] Isaiah vi. 1.

well nigh forgotten. They have lain pent up in the hidden recesses of our memory, not altogether forgotten, and yet hardly remembered: like dormant truths, which lie in the reason of children, ready to start into vivid life when wisely touched, and yet sometimes never elicited, and therefore never *known;* so the things which we understand not when we first hear or read, rise up as lights "in the day of visitation;" half-truths unfold their full outline; scattered truths draw together into an expressive context; and we seem to hear a voice saying, "Why would you not understand this before? Why make all this necessary? It is not spoken out more plainly now than it was years ago; but you would not understand." Equally true this is, also, of all bright and blessed truths: they also are quickened with a living energy. The promises of heaven, and the times of refreshing, and the rest of the saints, and the love of God, and the presence of Christ, which we have so long thought of, and talked about, and felt after, and yet never seemed to grasp,—all these likewise become realities. They seem to gather round us, and shed sensible influences of peace upon our suffering hearts: and this is what we mean when we say, "I have long *known* these things to be true, but now I *feel* them to be true." As Job, after his trial, said, "I have heard of Thee by the hearing

of the ear, but now mine eye seeth Thee." He had learned obedience through suffering.

And, in the next place, sufferings so put our faith on trial as to strengthen and confirm it. They develop what was lying hid in us, unknown even to ourselves. And therefore we often see persons, who have shewn no very great tokens of high devotion, come out, under the pressure of trials, into a most elevated bearing. This is especially true of sickness and affliction. Not only are persons of a holy life made to shine with a more radiant brightness, but common Christians, of no note or visibleness, are changed to a saintly character. They wrestle with their trial, as the patriarch with his unknown companion, and will not let it go without a blessing; and thereby the gifts which lie enwrapped in a regenerate nature are unfolded into life and energy. Perhaps almost every one is able, in looking back on his life past, to fix on the seasons which gave his character some new and determinate cast. He can look back, perhaps, and say, "Until such a time I lived without real thoughts of God; and then such a sickness gave my mind a startling check; and after that I lived inconsistently, between right conviction and unamended habits, until such an anxiety spurred me to take a decided line; but even then I had only selfish thoughts for my own salvation, without care

for others, until another trial came; and then, too, I remember that, for a long time, I had only the active and exciting parts of obedience, I had none of the passive features of faith, no meekness nor patience under wrong or slights, nor willingness to be overlooked and forgotten, and to die to the world, until a great sorrow came, and changed the whole current of my will. There have been stages and resting-places in my course; and I have moved at an uneven pace, sometimes faster and sometimes slower, according, as I see now, to the trials which came upon me; and all the deeper and more decided changes of my character are dated from the heavier and sharper visitations of suffering. How little did I once know of what I see now with a clear insight! What I used hardly to reason out, is now an intuition. Had I been left to myself, I should have known none of these things. They would have continued to be as shadowy and unreal as they were in childhood, and all my character would have been straitened and stunted. I have been well nigh passive, while He has been working out His will in me: He has chosen, and gone before me, and guided me by the rod of His chastisement. Little as I know even now, yet all I know I have been taught by trials: I have learned obedience by the things which I have suffered." Now, I say, perhaps every man will be able to trace out a

coincidence between these words and some part, at least, of his past life: and what does that shew, but the fact that God has been teaching him through the discipline of trials; making him to realise his knowledge, and unfolding his character into form and energy?

Once more: nothing so likens us to the example of Christ as suffering. It seems to be an inevitable law, arising out of the fall of the old, and the perfecting of the new creation—first, that the second Adam should be a "Man of sorrows;" and next, that we should be conformed to Him in this aspect of His perfection: "it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."[1] And it is not more in relation to sanctity than to sufferings, that St. Paul says that we were predestinated "to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."[2] And therefore, in another place, he asks, "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" and argues, that to be free from chastisement is an awful exemption, rather to be feared than coveted, as clouding the bright, though keen tokens of sonship, which are seen in them that suffer. There is a breadth and universality in this

[1] Heb. ii. 10. [2] Rom. viii. 29.

reasoning, which seems to force upon us the conviction, that no true member of His body who was made perfect through sufferings, shall pass out of life without at some time drinking of the cup that He drank of, and being baptised with the baptism that He was baptised with. And, indeed, if we look into the lives of His saints, we shall see that this is simply true. All that suffer are not therefore saints; alas! far from it, for many suffer without the fruits of sanctity; but all saints at some time, and in some way and measure, have entered into the mystery of suffering. And this throws light on a very perplexing thought in which we sometimes entangle ourselves: I mean, on the wonderful fact that oftentimes the same persons are as visibly marked by sorrows as by sanctity. We often see the holiest of Christ's servants afflicted with a depth and multiplication of sufferings beyond other men. They seem never to pass out of the shadow of affliction; no sooner is one gone off than another has come up; "the clouds return after the rain;" sorrow gathers into sorrow; sickness gives way before sickness; fears are thrust out by fears; anxieties are only lost in anxieties; they seem to be a mark for all the storms and arrows of adversity; the world esteems them to be "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted;" even religious people are perplexed at their trials. When

we see eminently holy persons suddenly bereaved, or suffering sharp bodily anguish, and their trials long drawn out, or multiplied by succession, we often say, How strange and dark is this dispensation! who would have thought that one so pure, so patient, and resigned, should have been so visited and overwhelmed by strokes? If they had been slack, or lukewarm, or backward, or self-willed, or entangled in worldly affections, we could better read the meaning of this mysterious trial; but who more earnest and useful in all good works; who so advanced in holiness, so nigh to the kingdom of heaven, as they?—And yet all this shews how shallow and blind our faith is; for we know little even of those we know the best; we readily overrate their character; at all events, it is far otherwise in the esteem of God than in our judgment: our thoughts are not His thoughts; we set up a poor, dim, depressed standard of perfection; and we should miserably defraud even those we love most, if it were in our power to mete out their trials by our measures: we little know what God is doing, and how can we know the way? and we often think that the sorrows of the saints are sent for their punishment, when they are sent for their perfection. Either way we are greatly ignorant. They may need far more of purification than we think; they may be suffering for an end

higher than purification; for some end which includes purification, and unknown mysteries besides. We forget that Christ suffered, and why; and how He learned obedience, and what that obedience was. He was all-pure; suffering could find no more to cleanse than sin could find to fasten upon. The prince of this world "had nothing" in Him; yet whose sorrow was like unto His sorrow, "wherewith the Lord afflicted" Him "in the day of His fierce anger?" and that, great as the mystery must ever be, not only and altogether as a vicarious suffering, but that in the truth of our manhood He might learn "obedience by the things that He suffered." He was made "perfect" by sufferings; and that "perfection," whatsoever it be, has an ineffable depth of meaning. It was not only a sacerdotal perfection by consecration to the priesthood of Melchisedec, but something of which that was the formal expression and manifestation; a great spiritual reality, a perfection of holiness, knowledge, obedience, will, and sympathy; this was the perfection in truth and spirit of "the one Mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus." And of this perfection, after the measures of a creature, and the proportions of our mere manhood, are the saints made to partake: they are purified, that they may be made perfect. And therefore the sorrows of the holiest minds are the nighest

approaches to the mind of Christ, and are full of a meaning which is dark to us only from its exceeding brightness. Our weak faith, which can read the earthlier teaching of affliction, goes blind when it follows the mystery of sorrow upward to the perfection of Christ. We know not what things they learn,—things which it is not lawful for a man to utter; and therefore their words are often to our ear incoherent, and we are ready to say, "What is this that he saith?... we cannot tell what he saith." It may be, that suffering plants the mind of man at a point of sight in the spiritual world, from which things altogether hidden from us, who stand by and see his afflictions, and until then even from himself, become visible; such, for instance, as the nature of evil, of temptation, of disobedience, of the fall of man, of our birth-sin, of death, of the striving of the Holy Ghost with the unholy in the mystical body of Christ, of responsibility, and of a crucified will; such also, as the counterpart of these realities, the nature of regeneration, and of Christ's presence in the Church and holy sacraments and in the heart of the faithful, and the beauty of holiness, the resurrection of the body, the bliss of heaven, and the like. Now it must be remembered, that all these things we *know* from childhood; but suffering may be the necessary condition to our *feeling* them. We have need, it may be, to be made like

to our Lord, not only in His purity, but in His passion, if we would learn these things; for they are learned not so much by being presented to our minds, as by the posture of the will, and the attitude of the spiritual being, wrought through the discipline of suffering. We must be changed, before even what we see will be seen, or what we know will be known, aright. And it may be that anguish of soul, or pain of body, is that which alone can transfigure our inward being. And this throws light upon the whole subject of fasting, and self-affliction, and of the ascetic life, which are but lesser forms of the discipline of sorrow: but of this we cannot now speak. I will only add, that if we ponder on the incomprehensible nature of pain, mental and bodily; of its invisibleness, its vividness, its exceeding sharpness and penetrating omnipresence in our whole being, of its inscrutable origin, and the indissoluble link which binds it to sin; and, lastly, of its mysterious relation to the passion and perfection of our Lord,—we shall see reason to believe that a power so near and awful has many energies, and fulfils many designs in God's kingdom secret from us.

And therefore, when we look at the sufferings of pure and holy minds, let us rather stand in awe, as being called to behold, as it were, a shadow of our Redeemer's sorrows. The holier they are that

suffer, the higher is the end for which they are afflicted. It may be, they are learning inscrutable things of the same order with those which the apostle saw in ecstacy. Even with bleeding hearts and deep-drawn prayers for their consolation, let us try to believe that God is endowing them with surpassing tokens of love, and with pledges of exceeding glory.

And for ourselves, let us be sure, when we suffer, that for chastisement and for purification we need more a thousand-fold than all He lays upon us. The heaviest and the sharpest of our sorrows is only just enough to heal us: "He doth not *willingly* afflict." If any thing short of our present trial would have wrought His purpose of love to us, He would have sent the lighter, and kept back the heavier; He would have drawn over our hearts a smooth rod of warning, and not a sharp edge of correction. But nothing short of what we have would do; any thing less, perhaps, would have been a shadow of eternal misery, woe without repentance. Let us remember, too, that sufferings do not sanctify: they are only the seasons of sanctification; their end will be for good or ill, as we bear and as we use them; they are no more than times of invitation to diligent toil, like the softness of the earth after a keen and piercing shower. They hold in check, for a time, our spiritual faults, and prepare

our hearts to receive and to retain deeper and sharper impressions of the likeness of our Lord. Let us count them precious, blessed seasons, though dim and overcast; seasons of promise and of springing freshness; tokens of His nearness and purpose to cleanse us for His own. "Blessed are ye that weep now." He that is greatly tried, if He be learning obedience, is not far from the kingdom of God. Our heavenly Father is perfecting the work He began in holy baptism; laying in the last touches with His wise and gentle hand. He that perfected His own Son through sufferings, has brought many sons to glory by the same rough road, even by the "way that is desert." He is now bringing you home to Himself. Do not shrink because the path is broken and solitary, for the way is short, and the end is blessed.

SERMON XXI.

THE SLEEP OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED.

1 Thess. iv. 13, 14.

"I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him."

One great miracle in the new creation of God is this, that death is changed to sleep; and therefore in the writings of the New Testament we do not read of the "death" of the saints. "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep."[1] The "bodies of saints which slept arose."[2] "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."[3] "David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep;"[4] even in the pelting of the bloody storm, the holy Stephen "fell asleep."[5] And therefore St. Paul in the

[1] St. John xi. 11. [2] St. Matt. xxvii. 52. [3] 1 Cor. xv. 51.
[4] Acts xiii. 36. [5] Acts vii. 60.

text speaks of the saints unseen as of those that "sleep in Jesus;" and Christians were wont to call their burial-grounds cemeteries, or sleeping-places, where they laid up their beloved ones to sleep on and take their rest. Let us, therefore, see why we should thus speak of those whom we call the dead.

First, it is because we know that they shall awake up again. What sleep is to waking, death is to the resurrection. It is only a prelude, a transitory state, ushering in a mightier power of life: therefore death is called sleep, to shew that it has a fixed end coming. Much as the heathen felt after this, and mused, and boded, yet, after all, death and the world of the dead was to them a dreary night. They saw men going down into the dust, but they saw none come back again: they had heard no whispers of the resurrection of the body. If the disembodied spirit should live on, that was all they could attain unto; but even this was clouded and dim. And their poets were wont to bewail the fleetingness of life, and the unknown condition of the dead. They were wont to say: "Alas, alas, the mallows and the fresh herbs of the field, when they die, return again to life, and spring another year; but we, the great, the mighty, the wise, when once we die, and are laid in the hollow earth, we sleep a long, an endless, and unbroken sleep!" Even the Jews but dimly saw the

coming shadows of the resurrection. Death was too nigh, too mighty, and too absolute; they saw and felt his dominion. Of his overthrow they had both promise and prophecy; but as yet he seemed too tyrannously strong to pass away into a transitory sleep. It was for the Gospel to reveal this mystery by the miracle of Christ's resurrection. It was revealed in act; and now death is destroyed. It is a kindly soothing rest to the wearied and world-worn spirit; and there is a fixed end to its duration. There is a waking nigh at hand; so that the grave is little more than the longest night's sleep in the life of an undying soul.

Again; death is changed to sleep, because they whom men call dead do really live unto God. They were dead while they lived this dying life on earth, and dead when they were in the last avenues of death. But after they had once died, death had no more dominion: they escaped as a "bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare" was "broken," and they were delivered. It may sound strange to unbelieving ears to say, that we are dead while we live, and alive when we die. But so it is. Life hangs not on matter, or on the organisation of matter. It is not as the harmony which rings out of a cunning instrument; but it is a breath, a spirit, a ray of the eternal being, pure, immaterial, above all grosser compounds, simple and indissoluble. In

the body it is allayed and tempered with weakness, shrouded about with obstructions; its faculties pent up by a bounded organisation, and its energies repressed by "the body of this death." It is life subjected to the conditions of mortality. But, once dead, once dissolved, and the unclothed spirit is beyond the affections of decay. There is no weakness, nor weariness, nor wasting away, nor wandering of the burdened spirit; it is disenthralled, and lives its own life, unmingled and buoyant. When the coil of this body is loosed, death has done all, and his power is spent: thenceforth and for ever the sleeping soul lives mightily unto God.

And, once more; those whom the world calls dead are sleeping, because they are taking their rest. "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth. Even so, saith the Spirit; for they rest from their labours." Not as the heretics of old vainly and coldly dreamed, as if they slept without thought or stir of consciousness from the hour of death to the morning of the resurrection. Their rest is not the rest of a stone, cold and lifeless; but of wearied humanity. They rest from their labours; they have no more persecution, nor stoning, nor scourging, nor crucifying; no more martyrdoms by fire, or the wheel, or barbed shafts;

they have no more false-witness, nor cutting tongues; no more bitterness of heart, nor iron entering into the soul; no more burdens of wrong, nor amazement, nor perplexity. Never again shall they weep for unkindness, and disappointment, and withered hopes, and desolation of heart. All is over now: they have passed under the share. The ploughers ploughed upon their back, and made long furrows; but it is all over, never to begin again. They rest, too, from the weight of "the body of our humiliation"—from its sufferings and pains. Their last sickness is over. They shall never again bear the tokens of coming dissolution: no more the hollow eye, and the sharp lines of distress, and the hue of a fading loveliness. Now is their weariness changed into refreshment; their weakness into excellence of strength; their wasting into a spirit ever new; their broken words into the perfection of praise; their weeping into a chant of bliss. And not only so, but they rest also from their warfare against sin, against all its strength, and subtilties, and snares. Satan can tempt no more, the world cannot lure, self cannot betray: they have wrestled out the strife with the unseen powers of the wicked one, and they have won the mastery: there is no more inward struggle, no sliding back again, no swerving aside, no danger of falling: they have gained the shore of eternal peace. Above all, they rest from the

buffetings of evil in themselves. It is not persecution, nor oppression, nor the rage of Satan, nor the thronging assaults of temptation, that so afflict a holy man, as the consciousness that evil dwells in his own inmost soul. It is the clinging power of spiritual evil that sullies his whole being: it seems to run through him in every part; it cleaves to every movement of his life; his living powers are burdened and biassed by its grasp. Evil tempers in sudden flashes, unholy thoughts shooting across the soul, kindling fires in the imagination, thoughts of self in holiest seasons, consciousness of self in holiest acts, indevoutness of spirit, earthliness of heart, dull musing heaviness in the life of God,—all these burden the highest saint with a most oppressive weight. He feels always the stretch and tension of his spiritual frame, as a man that is weary and breathless grappling with a foe whom, if he would live, he must hold powerless to the earth. But from all this, too, they rest. The sin that dwelt in them died, when through death they began to live. The unimpeded soul puts forth its new-born life, as a tree in a kindly soil invited by a gentle sky: all that checked it is passed away; all that draws it into ripeness bathes it with fostering power. Then, at last, shall the bride hear the Bridegroom's voice: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away; for, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over

and gone."[1] The Refiner shall perfect His work upon them, cleansing them seven-fold, even as gold seven times tried; and all the taint and bias of their spiritual being shall be detached and corrected; till, by direct and intense vision,—not as now in a glass darkly, but then face to face,—shall they become pure even as He is pure. Hidden as is the condition of their sleep, may we not believe that they remember us? How much of all that they were must they forfeit, if they lose both memory and love! Shall we think that we can remember Bethel, and Gibeon, and the Valley of Ajalon, and Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives; but that Jacob, and Joshua, and David, and the beloved disciple, remember them not? Or shall the lifeless dust that their feet stood upon be remembered, and the living spirits above, that dwelt with them, be clean forgotten? May we not think that they who live unto God, live in the unfolded sameness of personal identity, replenished with charity, and filled with a holy light: they reach backward in spirit into this world of warfare, and onward in blissful expectation to the day of Christ's coming: and in that holy waiting they adore, as the brightness of paradise ever waxes unto the perfect day, when the noontide of God's kingdom "shall be as the light of seven days," and shall stand for ever in a meridian splendour. He hath

[1] Song of Solomon ii. 10, 11.

made His rest to be "glorious;" and there is He gathering in His jewels. There is the multitude of saints, waiting and worshipping: Abel is there, and Isaiah, and Rachel who would not be comforted, and the sonless widow, and Mary Magdalene, and all martyrs, and all the holy ones of God. They wore out with patience the years of this toilsome life; and they are resting now. They "sleep in Jesus." Theirs is a bliss only less perfect than the glory of His kingdom when the new creation shall be accomplished.

For these reasons, then, death is changed to sleep; so that it becomes a pledge of rest, and a prophecy of the resurrection.

And now consider shortly a few thoughts which follow from what has been said.

And, first; we ought to mourn rather for the living than for the dead. For these six thousand years the whole earth has been full of wailing for the dead. And it was well for the heathen man, when he beheld the clay-cold body of death, to bewail in passionate complaint the change and decay of his beloved ones. But not for us, who dwell in the new creation. If we needs must weep, then let us not weep for the dead, for they are at rest; but let us weep for the living, for they have yet to die,—and death is terrible. For, after all, death is a strange and awful thing, alien from a living spirit.

It is a thing of fear; full of confused throes, and perturbations, and of shadows cast from the powers of evil. The dissolving of the bands of the flesh is a dark and fearful change, against which nature struggles, and in struggling suffers agony. And the passing of the soul is awful even to the saints. Who can so much as imagine the faintest thought of that fearful going forth of the houseless spirit into the wide world unseen; or of the first sights and sounds which shall throng upon its vivid consciousness? What are all the terrors of the night-season compared with that hour of fear? "In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men, fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up: it stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice, saying, Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker?" But what is this to the passing of the soul into the piercing eyesight of our Judge? Wherefore let no man weep for the dead: that awful change for them is over. For this end we came into the world. They have fulfilled their task; ours tarrieth. Almost we are ready to say, Would it were over!—O fearful death! It has a lure which thrills in all my

soul, and seems to draw me to itself; it fixes me by the fascination of its dead-cold eye. Death is coming towards me. I must one day die, and "how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" Blessed and happy dead! great and mighty dead! In them the work of the new creation is well nigh accomplished. What feebly stirs in us, in them is well nigh full. They have passed within the veil, and there remaineth only one more change for them—a change full of a foreseen, foretasted bliss. How calm, how pure, how sainted, are they now! A few short years ago, and they were almost as weak and poor as we; burdened with the dying body we now bear about; harassed by temptations, often overcome, weeping in bitterness of soul, struggling, with faithful though fearful hearts, towards that dark shadow from which they shrank as we shrink now.

And, lastly; in very truth, it is life, rather than death, that we ought to fear. For life, and all that it contains,—thought, and speech, and deed, and will,—is a deeper and more awful mystery. In life is the warfare of good and ill; in life is the "hour and the power of darkness," the lures and the assaults of the wicked one. Here is no rest, no shelter, no safety. What a charge, what a stewardship, is this little fleeting, squandered life of man! In every hour of it we are changing for good

or ill; ever growing better or worse, nigher or farther from God, nigher to heaven or to hell. Surely, life, with all its powers, capacities, probation, and responsibility, is a thing to tremble at. And yet we are in the midst of it; and the world is moving on around us, and we are caught and drawn along in its movements, and all our life is gathering itself up for one great cast; and few men know for what. Their life is lived for them. Powers from without shape their character and fix their doom, and they are dragged along in a bondage of custom, which their fearless trifling with life has made to be irresistible. And who shall not fear the changes and chances of this mortal life? Who, even the most resolved? Between this hour and the hour of death, who can foresee what may befall us? what unknown swervings, what stumblings, what falls? Who shall promise himself the gift of perseverance? Who can but fear his own heart's treachery? Who but tremble at the awful words uttered by the Church as often as she buries her dead out of her sight—words not less of warning than of prayer, words of depth unutterable: "O holy and most merciful Saviour, suffer us not at our last hour for any pains of death to fall from Thee." Wherefore let us fear life, and we shall not be afraid to die. For in the new creation of God death walks harmless. Christ hath plucked

out the sting; and "the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den." All is healed by Him who hath given His own flesh "for the life of the world." Therefore, when at last it comes nigh, we shall behold its darkness pierced every way by rays of a living light, and the gloom of its dread presence softened with the radiance of eternal peace. Even though our last passage be fearful to the flesh, though we be called to follow through the fire of a bodily anguish, still in the midst of all, and with we know not as yet what gracious visitations to allay our closing struggle,—even as they had of old, who bare witness from the torture and the flame,—we shall fall asleep. Let us therefore be much in thought with them that are at rest. They await our coming; for without us they shall "not be made perfect." Let us therefore remember, and love, and follow them; that when our last change is over, we, with them, may "sleep in Jesus."

SERMON XXII.

THE COMMEMORATION OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED.

1 Cor. xv. 51.

"We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed."

It is plain from the writings of St. Paul, that even the apostles of our Lord did not know but that their Master's coming might be in their own lifetime. He had, for the secret ends of His divine wisdom, left the day of His return unknown, that they might never give over watching. With them the strange thing was, not that He should be so nigh at hand, but that He should tarry so long. But time ran on: He called some away from their earthly vigil: they began one by one to fall asleep; they whose eyes were dim with age, and the martyrs who were early bid to follow their Lord unseen: and as the time still lingered, and the storm fell upon the Church, the visible fellowship of saints grew thin, and apostles, evangelists, bishops, and holy brethren, fell asleep one by one. But

the Church neither forgot them, nor deemed that they were severed from her fellowship. The communion of saints was a part of their baptismal faith; and though hid from her eyes, she knew they were nigh in spirit. And she fostered them in memory, and wrote their names in her book; and wheresoever the saints, that were still left on earth to watch for the Lord, met together in the communion of the holy eucharist, she read aloud their names, as bidding them to their wonted place in her choir. She commemorated them with thanksgivings, and commended them to God's keeping as her precious treasures.

Now this was done, first of all, out of love to them and to their image. She fondly cherished every remembrance of their words and deeds, of their gentleness and purity: she rejoiced over them with a sorrowful gladness, as a mother musing over departed children: she could no longer behold them, and break bread with them; but she could prolong their presence by the vivid recollection of their beloved image, and by the consciousness of an united adoration: she knew that while she tarried praying without, they were but within the precinct of an inner court, nearer to the eternal throne.

And next, she commemorated them in faith, to keep up the conscious unity of the Church.

They were not severed, but only out of sight. The communion of saints was still one. Nothing was changed but the visible relations of an earthly life: all the unseen relations of love and fond attachment still remained, nay, were knit more closely; for they that were yet watching had an intenser love, softened and purified by sorrow; and they that slept were full of the love of God. The unity of the saints on earth with the Church unseen is the straitest bond of all. Hell has no power over it; sin cannot blight it; schism cannot rend it; death itself can but knit it more strongly. Nothing was changed but the relation of sight; like as when the head of a far-stretching procession, winding through a broken hollow land, hides itself in some bending vale: it is still all one; all advancing together; they that are farthest onward in the way are conscious of their lengthened following; they that linger with the last are drawn forward as it were by the attraction of the advancing multitude. Even so they knew themselves to be ever moving on; they were ever pressing on beyond the bounds of this material world. They knew the life of the Church to be one, and indivisible; that, seen or unseen, there was but one energy of spiritual being, in which all were united; that all were nourished by the same hidden manna, and slaked their thirst in the same waters of life. They were one in the

personality of Christ's mystical body; and all their acts of love and adoration were shared in full by each several member.

Again; they commemorated their sleeping brethren in faith, that they might give God the glory of their salvation from this evil world. They ceased not to render the sacrifice of thanks to Him for His accomplished mercy in forgiving them their many sins. They remembered what they had been at the first; how from blind Judaism, or blinder heathenism, or a proud philosophy, or from a sensual life, God had translated them "into the kingdom of His dear Son;" how He had made them new creatures. They forgot not John Baptist, and the ever-blessed Virgin, and John the beloved disciple, and Mary Magdalene, and Saul the persecutor, and those vessels of grace in whom was reflected the fulness of God's pardoning mercy. In the commemoration of the saints, they shewed forth the manifold grace of Christ, and the manifold fruits of His mysterious passion; and thus, while they lovingly cherished their memories, they also, and above all, glorified the King of Saints. But they had also another design in this act of commemoration; namely, to stir up the faithful in their warfare by the deeds of the saints in rest. Well did they know that nothing preaches like example. The day was not come when man should under-

take by words and lifeless signs alone to win souls for Christ. They knew that words are as weak as deeds are almighty; that Moses was slow of tongue, and that some deemed even the speech of Paul contemptible; that deeds carry all before them. Therefore they unrolled, year after year, and feast after feast, the catalogue of saints, and read aloud their warfare and their victory; thereby to embolden with a holy daring the Church militant on earth; to put a new heart and a new life into the weary and the wavering; to shew what is possible, what is easy, for regenerate man to do; to provoke us to a manlier faith by desire for a crown like theirs, and by shame at a life like our own.

I have now stated generally the intention of the Church in keeping up the memory of her sleeping members. It arose naturally, and by the unconscious promptings of love and faith. The perpetual commemoration of the saints fulfilled, even in the ages of the most enkindled charity and of the keenest faith, high and significant offices in the witness of the Church. But most of all is it of moment now, in days when faith is faint, and the love of many hath waxed cold. We will, then, consider a while, of what especial moment is this affectionate commemoration in feasts and eucharists to the Church of these latter times.

And, first of all, it is a witness against what I

may call the Sadduceeism of Christianity. It is strange enough that faith and love should have waxed so chill and dead among the Jews of old, that any should have arisen to deny the resurrection, and the very being of angels and of spirits; but stranger far that Christians should be sunk so low in cold, unfeeling torpor, as to live forgetful of the world unseen. Alas, how awful is the chastisement which follows on irreverent handling of holy things! Our forefathers too boldly ventured in within the veil, and troubled the sleep of the saints with importunate invocations; and thrust upon the followers of Him, who sought to hide Himself when men would have come to make Him a king, offices and dignities in God's kingdom, of which the prerogative is God's only. And from their first bold step they passed on to a prying curiosity into the secrets of God's hidden world; and must needs mete out the measures and conditions of the holy and the unholy dead, and leave little known to God alone, but know all things, even beyond His revelations, and before His time: and in the realms of the unseen they grew bewildered, and thought they saw horrible phantoms, which mocked them into a belief of their own fevered imaginations. And on these they built up a lying doctrine, and beguiled men by a still more lying practice, and turned the unseen world into a fable, and the commemoration

of the saints into a snare. And from this, by a not unnatural recoil, what they over fondly doated on, we have coldly forgotten. The superstition of ages past has recoiled into the Sadduceeism of to-day. Now I am not speaking of free-thinkers, but of good and earnest people. They so overlook the time between death and resurrection, as virtually to shut it out of their belief: they make it almost a test of sound doctrine to leave out all teaching of the unseen state. With the entire book of the Apocalypse before their eyes, of which (except the last two chapters) the whole relates to the lifetime of this visible world, and the parallel state of waiting and adoration in the world invisible, they think a cold reserve the surest token of illuminated faith. Not, indeed, when sorrow breaks upon them, and loved ones pass into the paradise of God: then nature, and truth, and love, are too strong for them; and the instincts and affections of their new-born hearts, long pent up in a forced and unnatural constraint, come down in full tide upon them, and carry them over the narrow barriers of their unsympathising theology. A riven heart is the best exposition of God's teaching about the saints asleep. Few have ever sorrowed, and missed learning these mysteries of consolation. Sometimes, alas, this is not so. The habitual unconsciousness of an unseen world, in which even good men have been content to live,

so insensibly deadens the quickness of the spiritual perceptions, that the heaviest sorrow leaves upon their hearts but a shallow and short-lived impress of the intermediate state. For a while their affections follow the departing spirit; and it may be they think their hearts will never return to this rough world, but dwell within the veil for ever. In a little time the first visions of the realities unseen, be they never so vivid, begin to fade into a colder light; and realities soften off into shadows, and shadows melt into films, and from films they draw themselves into motes; and this world and all its going-on of life, and the hurryings to and fro of every day, and the emptiness of home, and the loneliness of night, and the returning sadness of the morrow, so throng about a man, and first lower upon him, and then settle heavily upon him, that many give back from their first faith, and unbind their resolutions, and sink away from the severer life of walking on the brink of the world unseen. The end of this is, that they become again, for the most part, what they were before; humbler, and it may be, more softened, more tender; on the whole, more religious,—but still entangled in the near and sensible things of this earthly life. And thus they make forfeit of the hidden blessings which God has tendered to them. They choose again a full home, rather than an empty one, fellowship rather

than loneliness, a lower rather than a higher level in the life of God.

But though this is a sadder sight in better men, the full Sadduceeism of the day is to be seen in the great mass of less earnest minds. It is not too much to say, that in a little while they have forgotten the dead. Of course there are exceptions: warm hearts will always cling, by an involuntary and almost unconscious fondness, to the memory of the departed. But here is the very difference: it is to their memory, not to their fellowship; to what they were, not to what they are. They look back on them, and remember their poor struggling humanity, their life of earth, their body of humiliation; all their endearing images are of early days, and gleams of transient happiness, and soft smiles, and softer tears, and the smooth cheek, and the full eye of this life's painted fairness; so that, after all, it is an embodied image, a dream of the earth, that such fond hearts still dwell upon. O, that they had learned a higher and holier lore! Their loved ones are still the same, and yet are not what they were: they have passed from the humiliation of the body to the majesty of the spirit. The weakness, and the littleness, and the abasement of life, are gone; they are now excellent in strength, full of heavenly light, ardent with love, above fallen humanity, akin to angels. And it is we that pity the

dead, call them poor, and shed tears over their coil of dust, which they put off at their exaltation. The living pity the dead? horrible pride! blind folly! while it may be they muse sadly and lovingly on us, and on our burdened and fretful life.

Most earthly, then, are the images of the sleeping saints even in better minds: as for the rest of men, they soon forget them. When they have buried their dead out of their sight, the unseen world closes up with the mouth of the grave; and they turn back to their homes, and muse in sadness how they may begin to weave the same web over again, and make a new cast for happiness, and begin life afresh. It makes one's blood run cold to hear some people talk of the departed. And why is all this? What should put so unnatural a face upon the very instincts of the heart, but the cold tradition of a Christian Sadduceeism? Against this, then, the commemoration of the Church is a direct and wholesome witness.

Another most excellent benefit of this commemoration is, its tendency to heal the schisms of the visible Church. No particular branch of the visible body can be in energetic unity with the fellowship of other Churches, so long as its fellowship with the Church unseen is suspended. This contact with the invisible is the life of the visible Church: when once the bond of faith and love

with this is loosened, the bond of visible unity also is well nigh dissolved. In all the contests of the Church on earth, all her members, be they never so much divided (so that it be not by heresy or schism), still hold communion in the court of heaven. They all find a common head in the King, and a common fellowship in the communion of saints. Their hearts make, as it were, a silent appeal from each other's misunderstandings to that world where all things are fully understood. In the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs, the holy Church throughout all the world is one. The eastern and the western are one in Athanasius and Cyprian, in Basil and Augustine; and in the lines of holy bishops, and the companies of blessed saints long ago fallen asleep, the Churches of the west are one. Schisms are half healed when hearts are chafed into love towards one common object; even as alienated sons meet and embrace in their love to one fond mother. And as the saints of Christendom are the unearthly bond even of divided Churches, so is the hallowed ancestry of each particular Church a bond of unity to its several members. Men are already half reconciled when they have agreed to honour one and the same spiritual lineage. It calls them out of themselves, and corrects the lordliness and pride of the

individual will. O how infinitely mean appears all our fretfulness and littleness, which we would fain impose on others, and on ourselves, as zeal for truth, and jealousy for the glory of God! If they that sleep could read to us out of the book of their earthly life, how should we burn for shame at the poverty and baseness of our own! Therefore the Church commemorates their earthly warfare, that we may go forth out of ourselves in a reverent love for those whose sanctity abashes our inflated self-esteem. She bids us remember that, in comparison with her mighty dead, we are but worms; that the Church is not ours to rend and set in array, nor to patronise, and irreverently praise; that we are but one of a flowing tide of generations — one only — and that neither the wisest nor the best. Better were it for us to stand in awe at our own littleness. We are but a handful of restless, fretful, self-exalting children in the sight of the great and holy saints.

Therefore, year by year, let us reverently commemorate their names, remembering what they were, but stedfastly gazing at what they are. Their very words are still ringing in our ears: of some the beloved image too is full before us. Let us live as they would bid us, could they still speak: let us fulfil their known behests, following in their steps, filling up the works that they began, carrying

on their hallowed offices now bequeathed to our care: let us be like them in deadness to sin, and unceasing homage to our unseen Lord. As we grow holier, we grow nigher to them: to be like them is to be with them: even now they are not far from us, we know not how nigh. As yet, for a time, the veil is drawn. We shall know all at His coming. It may be, we shall say—What! so near, and we could not see you? At times we could almost fancy we were not alone; but when we strained our sight, we saw nothing; when we listened, all was still.

SERMON XXIII.

THE WAITING OF THE INVISIBLE CHURCH.

Rev. vi. 9, 10, 11.

"And when He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled."

These are the sights and sounds which St. John saw and heard in heaven, when the Lamb had opened the fifth of the seven seals which made fast the awful book. He saw an altar, and under it the souls of Christ's faithful servants who had been slain for His sake. And they were weary of waiting for the day when God should judge the earth. They were at rest, and yet there was a rising of desire for the end: "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood?"

They were impatient, not so much for their own wrongs, as for the glory of God. They were weary that sin should so long war against the majesty of heaven; that God's world should so long be torn by the rending strife of spiritual evil. They had, in their lifetime, made full trial of its tyranny and hate; and the long train of remembered wrongs heaped on them for their loyalty to Heaven kindled a fire in their souls. But the time was not yet come. Very awful was the answer to their cry. "White robes were given unto every one of them;" some larger visitations of His sustaining grace: they were refreshed in their weariness by some mysterious gift; and it was said unto them—no need to say who it was that bade them tarry; for who but He could stay their yearnings?—it was said unto them, "That they should rest yet for a little season." God had a work yet to do. Their fellow-servants must needs be slain as they were; and all must be fulfilled. Then should the end come.

Now there is one point in this to which we will direct our thoughts: I mean, the light it throws upon the great mystery of Christ's second coming. We may gather with all certainty from this wonderful revelation of the inner mysteries of the heavenly court, first, that God has a fixed time for the end of the world. This we know from our Lord's

words while He was yet on earth. While He declared the secrecy of that time to be such that it was hidden from all, both men and angels, yet He specially added, that it was a time fixed and known to the Father. I do not mean simply known as all things must be known to an all-knowing God, but foreseen and fore-determined in the secrets of His hidden wisdom. And this leads on to another truth revealed in the same vision; namely, that God has fixed that time according to the measures of the work which He has to finish: even as Christ had a work to finish on earth; so that we read, again and again, that His "hour was not yet come." In like manner now in heaven, He has a definite, foreseen scheme for the administration of His mediatorial kingdom; and, according to the accomplishing of this work, will be the time of His coming. So much in a general way. But in this passage we have somewhat more specific and detailed.

1. He has shadowed out to us the nature of the work that He has to do before the end come; that is, to make up the certain number whom God has foreseen and predestinated to life eternal. This we read throughout Holy Writ. "They shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels,"[1] saith the Lord by the prophet Malachi. Then shall the angels "gather together His elect from the

[1] Mal. iii. 17.

four winds."[1] And, to take only one more passage, the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews shews us how God has ever been gathering out His chosen ones, from righteous Abel to this day. After running down the list of the faithful, St. Paul adds, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them." And, again, "God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."[2] Abel waited for Enoch, and Enoch for Abraham, and Abraham for Moses, and Moses for Paul; and so all holy men, bishops, and pastors, and saints, along the whole line of this world's history, have waited for us; and we shall wait, it may be, for others yet to come. God is gathering out a mystical number—the hundred and forty and four thousand, which is a symbol of all numbers innumerable—of the twelve tribes of the Israel of God; and He has been gathering them out one by one, from an age or a generation, from a people, a family, or a household, taking one, and leaving another, in the inscrutable mystery of His choice. Whether this secret number be measured by the fall of angels, as some of old were wont to believe; whether the companies of angelic ministers shall be filled up by the redeemed of mankind,—we know

[1] St. Matt. xxiv. 31. [2] Heb. xi. 13 and 40.

not, but we know certainly that until the foreseen number is completed, the course of this turbulent world shall still run on. This, then, in general, is the nature and direction of the mystery of this seemingly entangled world. Out of the midst of it He is drawing the children of the regeneration, knitting them in one fellowship, in part still visible, in part out of sight. When the Son of God passed into the heavens, He began to draw after Him a glorious train of saints, like as the departing sun seems to draw after him the lights which reflect his own splendour, till the night starts out full of silver stars. So shine the saints in an evil world; rising and falling above the boundaries of earth in stedfast and silent course, till all are lost in the brightness of the morning: and so shall the firmament of the Church break forth with the glory of the resurrection. But now, for a while, it tarries. Some saints are yet in the mid-heaven, and some are yet to rise upon the world; and, until all is fulfilled, the desire of the Church unseen is stayed with the "white robes," and the sound of the Bridegroom's voice.

Again; in this gathering out of the mystical body of His Son, God is carrying on the probation of mankind. In the inscrutable secrets of His providential government, He is so ordering the strife of the seed of the woman with the seed of the ser-

pent, of the Church with the world, as to fulfil the manifold purposes of love and of long-suffering.

And, first, we see that this long-permitted strife is ordained for the perfecting of His saints.

That holy fellowship is not more perfect in the integrity of its number, than in its absolute perfection of holiness. And the prolonged duration of this world is a school of discipline, to liken them to their perfect Lord. The powers of evil which are arrayed against the Majesty of heaven, are so overruled by the Almighty will as to work out unwittingly His high behests. The continual strife of spiritual good and evil is a mystery, of which we know only the outskirts. It has one end in the mystery of the fall, and the other in the mystery of the atonement: we know not what are the effects in the world unseen of this never-ending strife. It is in some way related to the mystery of the cross; not, indeed, as propitiatory, which nothing can be, but as a carrying out and consequence of that great overthrow of evil in which the Conqueror was bruised by the foe He crushed. Therefore we find St. Paul speaking of filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh;[1] and of the apostles he says, that they were set forth last, as it were, appointed unto death, "a spectacle unto the world, and to angels,

[1] Col. i. 24.

and to men:"[1] and "that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known, by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God."[2] It would seem, then, that this relentless strife between the seed of the serpent and the body of Christ is fulfilling some unrevealed design of God in the world unseen; that even the spirits of heaven, the elect angels, look on as learners upon this sleepless war. We are greatly ignorant what may be the place of this world in the universal scheme of God's creatures; what we think to be a great and final end, may be only a subordinate means to some transcendent purpose. And thus much is plainly revealed to us, that the trial of the Church and the probation of the world shall run on till the purpose of the Divine wisdom is fulfilled. And this was the key of the strange earthly lot of those who had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, of bonds and imprisonment; who were stoned, were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword; who wandered about in sheepskins, and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy. When they and their cause seemed lost for ever, then were they more than conquerors; even as Christ then overcame when He was crucified. In each one of them He overcame again.

[1] 1 Cor. iv. 9. [2] Ephes. iii. 10.

When they suffered most, they most mightily triumphed over the serpent. Let us remember, that not martyrs only are perfected through sufferings. They, indeed, are made glorious by a share of His sufferings in the flesh: but of His sorrow and self-denial all saints are partakers. The world is still the same; bitter, treacherous, and full of enmity against God. The law, that every man that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution, is still unrepealed in this fallen earth. Every faithful man will have the grace-tokens of the cross upon his inmost soul. By temptation, by wrestling against evil, by crucifixion of self, by wrongs and snares from without, by sorrow and afflictions from above, every brother of the First-born in the family of man will bear His likeness, and be perfected by the keen edge of pain. By this long-drawn and weary strife our patience, meekness, faith, perseverance, boldness, and loyalty to Christ are ever tried; and by trial made perfect.

And this mysterious work, as it has an aspect of love towards the saints, so it has an aspect of long-suffering towards sinners. It is thus that God gives them a full season for repentance. He delays His return, and tarries in the heavens; and scoffers have asked, Where is the promise of His coming? "But the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to

us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."[1] He lets the life of man run on through all its stages, from childhood to old age. He gives all things for our salvation, warnings, blessings, chastisements, sorrows, sicknesses, words of fire, and sacraments of love; He stays His hand, and leaves the sinner without excuse, that at the winding up of this weary life, "every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." What shall men say at that day? All the mysteries of truth and grace were ever nigh them; they lacked neither knowledge nor strength. They had a long life chequered with the tokens of His hand; sharp sicknesses, sudden accidents, desolating sorrows, slow deathbeds, all speaking clearly and piercingly to the dull ear on which the words of grace had fallen in vain. They lacked nothing which could awaken the soul of man. The whole order of mysteries in His Church and in His providence worked together, interweaving their powers, and bringing them to bear, as one manifold divine influence, upon the hearts of the unawakened; if any thing were still lacking, it was that they lacked the will.

Such, then, is this wonderful work of love unwearied. And all the while His Church is crying out, "How long, O Lord, holy and true?" the

[1] 2 Pet. iii. 9.

saints unseen waiting and longing for their perfect bliss; the saints on earth crying, day by day, "Thy kingdom come:" day by day, from all lands, throughout the whole Church, this cry goes up into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth: "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together:" all things would hasten the coming end: heaven is well nigh weary, and earth sick, for bearing the burden of sin and wrong: and yet God tarries. We must rest yet "for a little season;" and then, so soon as the sinner's day is done, and the saints are tried, and the foreseen number full, the end shall come; and time shall be no longer.

And now, from all this, we see what ought to be the master-aim of our lives: that is, to make sure of our fellowship in that mystical number. We see that it is not enough that we belong to the one visible Church. Many partake of the visible unity who in the invisible have no portion. The Church is like a sacrament, having both its outward and inward parts. The true Church has both a body and a soul: the body is that one, uniform, organised, universal polity, of which the succession of the apostles is the essential first condition: the soul is that inward unity of energetic faith, hope, and charity, which knits all saints, from the highest to the lowest, in one spiritual family.

These are the fruits, or result, of the visible unity; as the likeness of Christ is the effect of the holy sacraments in the faithful receiver. The visible unity is a sacramental means to the formation of this fellowship of sanctity. All regenerate men are saints in capability, but these are saints in fact. The former may be, the latter are, conformed to Christ's likeness. The difference is the same as between a moral nature and a moral habit: the nature may be passive, or be perverted; the habit must be developed by energy, and sustained by the powers of moral life. There is therefore no difficulty in testing ourselves. Every man can tell whether his life is energetically pure and holy or not. With the saints of old, martyrdom was the test, or saintliness of life, by which they bore martyrdom in the will, though they were never crowned with it in the body. And we, too, have no need to be doubtful of our state. The sure sign is the likeness of Christ growing in our hearts, waxing ever brighter from childhood, in boyhood, youth, and riper years; ever shining out more clearly as He draws nearer. This is the sure countersign. Plainly the sinful, the slothful, the double-minded, the worldly, and all who, under the strong assimilating power of the world, are growing into its likeness, are aliens from the soul of the one Church, and are as yet severed from the

mystical number which He is gathering out. True it is that we cannot draw any line so strongly marked as to cut off with absolute and visible certainty those who do, and those who do not, belong to that unseen fellowship. As there is twilight between noon and midnight, so are there infinite gradations of character: and yet this is certain, that no man that is not either freed from the power of sin, or repenting of his sin-soiled state, has any warrant to believe himself of that number. Many, indeed, there are of most imperfect sanctity; namely, those who are puffed up with vanity and ambition, and love of the pomps of life, its honour, power, high bearing, great friendships, and the like; and likewise, those who are opinionated and self-confident, fond of controversy, and prone to a controversial temper; or again, tinged with self-complacency, and addicted to a self-sparing, soft, relaxed religion, which clings to the alluring, but shrinks with dislike from the severer precepts of the faith. Now all these, and the infinite shades of character contained in them or related to them, may belong to the unseen fellowship; but their title to it is ambiguous, and their end doubtful. For all such the way is, not to strain after a high-toned devotion, till they have laid the deep basis of a thorough repentance. Their chief danger is, the weakness of an unnatural

growth, which has got above its healthy powers. The imagination and the intellect have simulated the forms of faith and sanctity, and they are in danger of persuading themselves that they really are what they are so well able to delineate. Repentance is the threshold of the invisible sanctuary where the saints are gathering, and here they must fall down before they think to enter. None but they that have either a pure or a broken heart shall see God.

Be careful, therefore, above all things, to commit yourselves to the great movement of God's providence in His Church, by which He is drawing His faithful within the curtains of His pavilion. Be not content to stand without, albeit in the precinct of the visible Church: there are more that gaze upon the outward ritual in which the earthly Church pays homage to her Lord, than enter into its mind and mystery. Pray Him to give you the white robes of sanctity and fellowship with the saints unseen, that you may wait in patience, lying under the altar, dead with Christ. Let daily worship, and the ever-returning sacrifice of the holy eucharist, be your life and food. We are fallen on an evil age; an age of bitterness and wrong, and deaf, inexorable slander, accusation, and strife, and separation. Martyrdom, and all its high and stirring fears, is gone, and the wearisome harassing of a

petty warfare has fastened on the Church. We are fallen on an age in which the chief zeal for truth is, that men have not so absolutely ceased to care for it, as to keep from quarrelling about it. Almost are we tempted to cry out, Would that a season of stern trial might sift the Church of all shallow, petulant, self-loving, boastful men, that the true and loyal hearts might be made manifest, and, by one decisive trial, short as it is sharp, win their crown of life. But not so; God has willed otherwise. We must wait, and not be weary; we must bear all the fretfulness and provocation of earthly tempers and false tongues for a little season. Meanwhile, the perpetual worship of our unseen Master, and the communion of hidden saints, and the fellowship of the invisible Church, shall be our strength and stay.

And see, also, how broad a light this throws on our duties towards all around us. The first debt we owe them is, to endeavour by all means to draw them into the same blessed fellowship. We owe this to every member of Christ's visible Church, but, above all, to such as are bound to us by ties of an especial nearness, whether by blood or by the benediction of the Church. There is no other lasting basis of friendship or affection, but this only, that our spirits be knit in the unseen unity of the saints. All else is mere falsehood. "Two

men shall be working in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left;" so shall all fellowships be cut asunder but those that meet in God. In the choice of friends, in all great changes and casts in life, let this be your rule. Such is the mysterious action and re-action of moral beings on each other, that no one can say what may be the end of an ill-chosen fellowship. "What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?"[1] On one side or the other the power of assimilation must prevail. How often has the earthlier mind drawn away a high and ripening spirit from the fellowship of saints! And O fearful fall which draws others in its ruin! Watch, then, and pray, that you may not only enter into the mystical sanctuary of saints, and go no more out, but gather in also all your loved ones, that there be no parting any more. Though God tarries, yet all things hasten on. Day by day we are nearer our last change. The unseen Church is crying "How long?" the Church in warfare ceases not continually to pray for the consummation of the elect. And albeit so short, yet this fleeting life to them is as a long and lingering day, which holds off a blessed morrow. Though the time be not yet, nevertheless there are tokens

[1] 1 Cor. vii. 16.

of mighty changes coming on the earth. The shadows are lengthening out, and the day of its toilsome life is well nigh spent. Oh, when He comes, and the dead are judged, and the names of those that have overcome, which are written in the Lamb's book of life, are read one by one in our ears, how shall our hearts thrill to bursting, while we hear prophets, apostles, martyrs, and saints, bid "come up hither;" and all our loved ones, a friend, a sister, a husband, each in turn called out, and clad in white robes for the marriage-feast! What if we should be left out at last? What if our name be "not found written in the book of life?"[1] "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord; for in Thy sight shall no man living be justified."

[1] Rev. xx. 15.

SERMON XXIV.

THE WAITING OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH.

1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31.

"This I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away."

After St. Paul had given to the Church in Corinth many counsels of wisdom and perfection, he brings all his teaching to this end: "Brethren, the time is short." Life is fleeting, and Christ is coming. In whatsoever state ye be, "the Lord is at hand." The apostles had been taught, by the parables of their Master, to look for Him at any time, as servants for their lord, and virgins for the bridegroom. The angels of His Father, who had received Him with glory into heaven, had bid them look for His coming even as He went away. And therefore they were for ever saying, "We shall not all sleep;" "We which are alive, and remain unto the coming of the

Lord, shall not prevent those that are asleep: for the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."[1] Again, "The night is far spent, the day is at hand."[2] "The end of all things is at hand; be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer."[3] And this habitual expectation chastened and subdued their hearts with awe and gladness; with a faith full of joy, and yet of fear. Their Lord was taken from them; but He was coming again; and the Church of Christ was as a family that had received one great visitation, and is waiting for another. At such a time, all thoughts are absorbed into one; all feelings, all cares, all forecastings; and that one thought and feeling is too great for words. All levity is repressed; all common and unnecessary things suspended; only necessary duties are tolerable, and they are done in an uncommon way. There is a check upon the mind, and a limit to all its movements. And men go about the business of life with a calm and sedate carriage, and meet each other with graver looks; for the one habitual master-thought of their hearts is, the greatness and nearness of God.

And so the Christians of early days did all things

[1] Thess. iv. 15-17. [2] Rom. xiii. 12.

[3] 1 St. Pet. iv. 7.

in the Lord: their buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, their weepings and rejoicings, were all measured, and checked, and subdued by the remembrance that "the time is short." They so lived as they would desire to be found by Him at His coming. There was a two-fold process ever going on within them,—the energy of daily life, and the fixed contemplation of Christ's advent. Nevertheless, "they were not slothful in business," but "fervent in spirit;" and for this reason, because they were "serving the Lord:" and yet there was in them a thought which was the centre of all their actings, and gave a steadiness and balance to all their daily life. The ever-present consciousness of their Master's nearness was as some deep undertone which runs through a strain of music, and gives it a staid and solemn spirit.

But if a man should enter the same household once in the hour of its first visitation, and again after a few years or months are gone, how would he find it changed! He would find it, as men say, calmed down, and grown more natural; become itself again, that is, in truth, become commonplace, having reverted, like a spring released from some antagonist pressure. The truth is, they that were so visited were, for a time, above and better than themselves; and while their trial lasted, they were sustained on a higher level; but now they are

only as they were before; as a man makes an effort, or strains his eyesight for a moment, and then relaxes again. For all things draw us back to our former habits: we are soon recast into old shapes, and led back into old ways. For a time, while the shadow of God's hand was upon our heads, we resisted the power and attraction of the world; but what we were was only a condition, not a character. It was not the man, but his circumstances, and his outward state, that were changed; as a person may change his vesture, or his countenance, by choice, or sympathy, or any accidental cause. Day by day he becomes bolder and more self-possessed, more intent and concentrated upon things below God and heaven: every object around him grows larger and distincter, and the visible light in which he once saw its just proportions fades from his sight; and the thought of God which dwelt within him goes up, like the glory in the prophet's vision,[1] from the threshold of the house, as if to depart from it. All men have made trial of this at some time, and know that the effect of a visitation is strangely evanescent. The checked character comes out once more, and each man is his own unrestrained self again; and he throws himself wholly into his trade or his business, into his grief or his joy, into the long-drawn aims of his ambition,

[1] Ezek. x. 4.

or the listless languor of his worldly life. In this and for this he lives. Things near at hand again bind round and overgrow his heart, and make it a part of themselves. He has no other energy of hope or fear; he neither looks nor waits for any thing beyond. The future has no power over him. It is too dim, too far off, and too unsubstantial, to counterpoise the gain of to-day, or the pleasure of to-morrow.

And so, after a season of higher thoughts, the whole tone of the mind is let down and weakened; and a second visitation would come with the suddenness of the first, and find us as before. Such has been, and such still is, the state of Christ's Church and household; it has left off to watch for the signs of His coming. One by one His servants have fallen asleep, while the Lord seemed to linger. Here and there, indeed, in the great multitude of churches and Christians, some have waited as men that had nothing to do in the world but to prepare for His appearing, weeping as though they wept not, and rejoicing as though they joyed not, as if the earth were floating under their feet, and the "white cloud"[1] ready to appear in heaven. But the mass of Christians have been otherwise minded. The body has slumbered: and from that day began a decline of the high and devoted temper of faith;

[1] Rev. xiv. 14.

men left their first love; and one by one fell away from the "breaking of bread," in which we shew forth the Lord's death till He come. While men watched for Him, this token was in some churches daily offered, in all weekly; but they began to forsake their testimony: and with this decline of diligent waiting upon God, declined also the ever-ready spirit of a Christian life. The power of the apostolic example seemed to have spent itself in the first generations, and men grew up into an earthly, commonplace habit of life. Then came debate and strife of words, vain doctrines spun out by the subtle, and true doctrines gainsayed by the unbelieving: and the simple faith of Christ crucified, in which "the wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not err," has been overlaid by snares of words, and beset by learned fancies; and the poor of Christ have been bewildered by their very teachers, and Satan hath beguiled them both; and the Church, which left off to dwell on the one thing needful, hath doated on a multitude of fables. Satan laid snares in every doctrine and in every mystery: the memory of the saints, the sleep of the faithful dead, the food of life, and the altar of God, became his lurking-places. The Church, against which he could not prevail, he used as an ambush.

And under this temptation, even the self-denying fainted; and a love of worldly ease, and pomp,

and wealth, filled the disciples of the fishermen of Galilee; and they grew weary of waiting for their Master's kingdom, and would fain bring it about before its time by a cunning of their own. And in His name they claimed dominion, and subdued kingdoms, and wrought unrighteousness, and gave away the thrones of kings, and taught the world rebellion; and Christendom split asunder in the midst; and the heirs of the blessing cursed each other from the seats of Christ. Wars broke out between churches; and they that should have untaught men the arts of war armed nation against nation; and Christian kings made the sacred cross a sign of bloodshed, and filled the world with tumult, and their own kingdoms with confusion. And in all this din of the great and mighty, the still small voice of truth was drowned, or pent up into cloisters; and private men were overcome with a devoted, immoderate love of worldly things, and began to plant and build; and the days of Noe came back again, which is the forerunning sign of the last times. Even the best grew heavy and tame, and left little or no stamp of God upon the world; but drank of its spirit, and loitered securely in its ways. They lost the vividness of faith, and learned an easy acquiescence in a lower standard, and were content to move along upon a lower level; though in the main Christian, they were not heavenly but

earthly-minded. Like Lot, they lifted up their eyes, and saw the plain "fruitful and well watered;" and first pitched their tent, and then built them an abode.

Such is now the every-day Christianity which we have inherited, and such our inconsistent state. Though we are ever saying, "He shall come again in glory to judge both the quick and the dead;" though we shew forth the Lord's death in the consecrated bread and wine; yet men are swallowed up in this mortal life. Fathers are mere fathers; husbands mere husbands; mourners are overwhelmed with grief; they that rejoice are excessive in their gladness. The man of science has few thoughts for a world unseen; the man of business no leisure; the calculator lives in his reckonings, the buyer in his bargain; the seller has no care beyond his price; the statesman is centred in his schemes, and his whole being terminates in his line of policy. Most men are just what they are in this life; and never rise above it, or look out beyond it. No purpose of their heart is controlled and checked by the thought of the day of Christ. They know that it must come; and deceive themselves into thinking that they are swayed by the expectation; but they neither do nor leave undone any thing that they would not do or leave undone, though He should never come again.

And even more thoughtful men silently prescribe a course for the providence of God; for where is there one who so feels himself uncertain of what shall be, as to say with St. Paul, "we shall not all sleep?" Men speak as if the apostle were mistaken, and themselves better taught. We all expect to live, and then in due time to die; and that Israel must be first grafted into Christ, and His kingdom be first universal, that there is much to be done before He can come again; and that whosoever shall be quick on earth at His appearing, yet surely we shall not. Both they that slight the prophecies of Christ, and they that over-wisely expound them, alike fall into the same snare; they would make some reckoning about that day and hour, of which no man knoweth—not even God's angels,—but the Father only. Surely it is as much a fault to say, It cannot be yet, as to say, It shall be at such time. Who can say when it shall be? Who dares to tell us when it shall *not* be? Uncertainty is the very condition of waiting, and the spur of expectation. All we know is, that Christ has not told us when He will come; but He has said, "Be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

Let us, then, draw some rules from what has been said, by which to bring this truth to bear on our own conduct.

1. First, let us learn not to go out of our lot and character in life, but to live above it. What and where we are, is God's appointment. It is He who makes us to joy or weep, to have or to lose. We have a work to do for Him; and it is just that work which lies before us in our daily life. It is only the restless impatience of self-will that drives a man to throw himself into new and strange positions, other than God has ordered. There is no state or office (not being in itself sinful) in all the complex bearings of a Christian commonwealth, which may not, by the spirit of obedience, be sanctified to God; and every state has a becoming character, which we are bidden to realise in ourselves. But this character must begin and end in God; must take its rise in His will, and terminate in His glory. It is not simply by weeping or rejoicing, buying or selling, abounding or suffering want, that we are what we are; but by doing and suffering all things as He would have us to do and suffer them. To affect contempt for all these natural states and actions of life, with the plea that we live for God, is mere affectation and contempt of God's own ordinance: to live without habitual thought of God, and of the day of Christ's appearing, with the plea that we are controlled by the outward accidents of life, is mere self-deceit, and abandonment of God Himself. And yet to these two

extreme faults almost all minds are continually tending: either to what is singular and ostentatious in religion, so ending in excitement, and often in declension; or to what is worldly and sullen, and, from a neglect of religion, ending in slighting and despising it.

2. To check these two extremes, then, let us strive to live as we would desire to be found by Him at His coming.

Who can bear the thought of being taken unawares in the madness of a sinful life, in secret vice, or in undisguised folly; or with a temper unrestrained, or puffed up with self-esteem, or wavering at every gust of fashion, or fettered by false customs, or over-careful about money, or fretful in a low estate, or murmuring in affliction, or dreaming away this short life in the unrealities of empty self-indulgence, or forgetful of God amidst the abundance of His chiefest blessings? Let us strive, then, to put off these things with a steady boldness, and, if need be, with a severe self-restraint. The trader, or the man of letters, or of a learned profession, or of a full and easy habit of life,—each must look into his own state. There is a characteristic temptation which besets every state—so subtle and insensible, that it is like the ill habits of gait and manner, which, being formed unconsciously, become hardly dis-

tinguishable from natural action, and yet produce some ill effects at last. Who is there that would not dread to be found at that day with a buried talent and an untrimmed lamp; with a sleepy conscience and a double mind; with a shallow repentance or a half-converted heart? Alas for the half-penitent, half-changed man, almost a Christian, and almost saved! It must not be so with us. At any cost, we must win eternal life. It is by living in our plain path of duty, but with an habitual remembrance of His coming; by using the world as we use our daily food, not so much from choice as from necessity, and yet with no unthankful sullenness, but with gladness and singleness of heart; by being ever ready, both for the duties of the day, and for the coming hour of judgment,—by this twofold discipline of self is the Christian man so prepared, that the day of Christ can neither come too late nor too soon for him.

3. Surely, then, we have need to lose no time; for "the time is short." If we dare not say, the time is not yet, how dare we *live* as if that were true which we dare not *say?* We shall lose nothing by being ever ready, and by living—if I may so speak, as men say of things they cannot calculate or control—on the chance. In the concerns of this life, the lightest overpoise of probability determines our strongest resolutions. Who

would tarry under a loosened arch? who would go upon a doubtful bridge? nay, even though the chances were in favour of escaping;—but the lightest probability would fix our resolve as surely as the greatest. And yet the certain warning, if we could have it, that we should die this day ten years, would move us more deeply than the uncertain chance whether we shall not die to-night. Brethren, we have a large stewardship to account for—a tale of many years, with all the manifold workings of thought and life: our lot, our character, and every particular of what we are; all our opportunities, and all the gifts of God,—all this reckoning must be rendered at His coming. And we have a sharp warfare to maintain against ourselves, against the strong will that wrestles against conscience: we have a trying struggle to endure, that we may enter in at the narrow gate. And the time for this great mastery is wearing away, and the day of our probation is well nigh spent. To a man that looks for Christ's coming, how utterly worthless are all things that can perish! How awful is that which is alone imperishable! All things about us shall be abolished. The solid earth shall melt, and the canopy of heaven shall be rolled away: but there is one thing which cannot die; one thing which will cleave and cling to us for ever; which we brought with us into the world;

which, whether we will or no, we must carry out; which, for good or for evil, haunts every man at all times, abroad and at home, in the busy throng of men, or in the dead stillness of solitude; which shall be with us in the hour of death, and stand by us in the day of judgment; —each man's own imperishable self; the immortal spirit of life which, with all its capacities of good or ill, in the beginning came from God, and, with the stamp it has here taken, must return to God again.[1]

Therefore, brethren, make sure your standing in His sight, and all things shall fall into their place; all parts of a Christian's life are in harmony,—time with eternity; his own soul with God. You will not joy the less, nor weep the more; the happiness of your home will not be clouded, nor the burden of your sorrow be freighted with a heavier load. No; to the true Christian life's cares shall be an easy, tolerable yoke, and all his heart's joys shall be ever deeper and more lasting. If we take all things as from God, and behold all things as in the light of the brightness of His coming, all shall be well. In a little while all will be unravelled, and the snares and bonds of life be broken, and we shall be where no man can be entangled, or offend, or fall any more. A little while, and the veil which hangs

[1] Eccles xii. 7.

between heaven and earth shall be rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and all that you have here held of God and for God you shall carry with you into the holy place; and all that is gone before you shall be found perfect, at the feet of our great High Priest, who standeth before the eternal throne.

SERMON XXV.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

St. Luke xxiv. 39.

"Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have."

While the apostles and the two disciples who had returned from Emmaus were speaking together of the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, He came and stood in the midst. They were "affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." He assured them that He was the same Lord with whom they had so long conversed; that He was no bodiless spirit, but the same man, Jesus Christ.

From this we see, that the very body which He took of the blessed Virgin, in which He "in-

creased in wisdom and in stature," which was also nailed upon the cross, was likewise raised from the dead. It was not another body like it, nor a mere appearance of His incarnate form; but the very same substantial and palpable frame which they were bidden to handle and see, in which He did "eat and drink" with them "after He rose from the dead." It was a body capable of all the energies of life, susceptible of all the perfect affections of our manhood, but impassible and deathless: for it was no longer a mortal body, but an immortal; and yet it was a body still: as the "natural," or animal body, of which St. Paul speaks, is a true body, not a disembodied life, so the "spiritual body" is a body, not a disembodied spirit. Therefore he says, "It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body: there is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."[1] Either way, both before and after the resurrection, it is a true body. So here it was the same in all its identity; only a change had passed upon its conditions: death had "no more dominion over" it: "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more." His manhood was thenceforward under the powers of "the spirit of life;" and in that human form He passed the closed doors, vanished out of the sight of Cleophas, and afterwards ascended into heaven.

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 44.

Now from this we may learn, in some measure, what shall be the resurrection of the flesh. We are told plainly, that it shall be the very same body we now dwell in, once more reorganised; purged of its earthly taint, and raised to the conditions of a spiritual life. To all questionings about the manner of this mystery, St. Paul answers, "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body."[1] St. Paul does not more intend to silence a disputatious objector by a natural mystery, than to assert that the great laws of the natural world have their counterpart in the spiritual; that our dissolution is in order to our resurrection; and that the body which is buried is the seed and principle of the body which shall be raised. The ear of corn is not more contained in the seed than the spiritual body in the natural: in both there is identity of being, and development from vile beginnings to more perfect forms of life. It is therefore as plainly and as strictly true to say, that this very body shall rise again, as that this very seed shall spring into an ear; and that the glorified flesh of the saints is the very same they bore in suffer-

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 36-38.

ing and death, as that the harvest of autumn is the very seed of spring. Of the mysterious changes and revolutions which fill up the interval between these two conditions of being, we know nothing; but there is a line of identity so running from each into the other as to make both one. Such, then, is the resurrection of the flesh.

There are some truths flowing from this doctrine, which we will now go on to consider.

1. We may learn, first, that the resurrection will be the restoration of the whole man, in spirit, and soul, and body; a restoration of all in which consists the integrity of our nature and the identity of our person. And this is emphatically the hope of the gospel. The light of nature could not shew this mystery. The heathen reached only to the immortality of the soul; and even that they saw but dimly, and often doubted. The sting of guilt, and the foreboding of conscience; the sense that the scheme of justice in this visible world is imperfect; and the instinct which feels after a retribution yet to come,—gave them some momentary insights into the world beyond the grave. They believed that there was a perfect justice somewhere above this wrongful world; and they could not but believe that, at some time, the inequalities of good and evil should be redressed; and they foreboded that the thinking, turbulent thing, which each man

calls himself, must needs live on ; their very hopes and fears prophesied of an hereafter. But for the body they knew not what to teach. They saw sickness fretting it away ; old age bowing it down ; the powers of nature taking it up into themselves ; death turning it into dust ; all that they saw looked on to dissolution : but that this corruptible and dissolving frame should ever be reorganised, nothing they saw and reasoned upon seemed to imply. They thought, therefore, that the world unseen should be peopled by spirits—a visionary world of bodiless shades—where, although each should still bear his name and character, yet there should have passed on them a change so great as to be rather the likeness than the sameness of their former being.

It would seem, too, that even the elder Church saw this mystery in broken and uncertain lights. They knew, indeed, that some had never died ; that some had passed in the body into an unknown state in the world unseen. Enoch and Elijah might teach them of the immortality of the flesh. They might also gather some thoughts of a resurrection from the remembrance of those who, having died, awoke again, and returned to the quick on earth, before they saw corruption : but that a body, once turned into dust, should be knit again in its former unity, that its perfect organisation should

be again restored, they had neither seen nor imagined; unless, indeed, we may believe that, here and there, a seer, illuminated above his fellows, saw the approach of greater things than even he himself conceived: as, for instance, Job, who in a twofold sense might say, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another."[1] And so, it may be, the Lord led onward His prophet's thoughts, when, in the valley of dry bones, He asked, "Son of man, can these bones live?"[2] And Daniel, we may believe, foresaw some great mystery, when he said, "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake:"[3] and Isaiah, when he said, "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead."[4] Without doubt, they saw as it were the refracted light of the coming mystery; but in some sense their eyes were holden, while they ministered to us greater things than they themselves conceived: for St. Paul declares that "life and immortality"

[1] Job xix. 27. [2] Ezek. xxxvii. 3. [3] Dan. xii. 2.
[4] Isaiah xxvi. 19.

are "brought *to light* through the Gospel."[1] It may be that we do not see more than they saw; but that what at best they saw dimly, we see with clearness of sight: and now every baptised child knows what sages doubtfully foreboded, and even prophets saw beneath a veil. Every Christian child knows that as Christ rose from the dead, in like manner shall we rise again, in all the fulness and sameness of our nature and our person; that we shall be at that day what we are now, save only that "mortality" shall be "swallowed up of life." And yet when I say, every Christian child *knows* this, I do not mean, that any, even the wisest of the saints, can penetrate into the depths of the mystery. What inconceivable meaning may lie in the words, "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" or in the promise that "there shall be no more death," so that death shall have "no dominion over" us: what mysterious change passed upon the father of us all in the day of the transgression, what cold, dissolving poison ran through his mortal body; or what quickening virtue, in the morning of the resurrection, shall once more restore our earthly frame, and knit again in one the dust we once inhabited, we know not. Life and death are alike beyond our grasp: all we know is, that as we die, so shall we rise; and that as

[1] 2 Tim. i. 10.

we are here subject to the powers of dissolution, so we shall there be deathless as the angels of God.

And as the resurrection is the perfect restoration of each several man, so shall it be of all mankind. They shall be as if they had never died. All the great stream of human life, issuing from the first living soul, and ever swelling itself by the multiplication of individual being, and the increase of people and nations from age to age; all that have ever lived from the beginning, both the evil and the good; the righteous Abel, the first of saints that slept, and all they who have been gathered to the same paradise; and the first man, whosoever he be, that died in his sins; and all that have gone into the same abode of sorrow—all shall be raised to life, and all shall be immortal. The wicked shall be once more clothed in flesh and blood—even in that very same in which they sinned and died: but there shall have passed a change upon them, and they shall be endowed with capacities of suffering and a sense of agony which surpass the imaginations of our hearts. And in that awful nature they shall be for ever deathless: "In those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it, and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them."[1] Being itself shall become an intolerable anguish; much more when compassed about

[1] Rev. ix. 6.

again with all the memorials and instruments of sin, with those very members wherewith they did despite unto the Spirit of grace. And so, likewise, shall it be with the holy dead: they shall be clothed with their hallowed flesh, but in a transfigured purity, the body of their humiliation being changed into the likeness of the body of His glory;[1] each in his measure, but all perfect; even as "there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory: so also is the resurrection of the dead."[2] All shall rise, "every man in his own order:" "the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them."[3] First the children of the kingdom, then the children of the wicked one,—multitudes that no man can number: two mighty companies, in one great family, gathered on the right hand and on the left of the Son of Man.

2. Now from what has been said, there is another truth which follows by an inference so direct as to be self-evident; and yet it is sometimes questioned. It is plain, then, that among those that are raised from the dead, there shall be a perfect recognition; and that not limited to the blessed,

[1] Phil. iii. 21. [2] 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42.

[3] 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17.

but, like the resurrection itself, comprehending the wicked also. It follows inseparably from the idea of personal identity, and the law of individual responsibility, that it should be so. Awful as the thought must be, we may not doubt that even in the outer darkness, they that have sinned together shall be conscious of their common anguish: and they that have here tempted their fellows in condemnation shall look in horror on the prey they have destroyed; and all the long-drawn consequences of their evil life shall be unfolded to their sight, in the misery of those that have fallen by their guilt: and in the kingdom of sorrow and spiritual wickedness, remorse, and revenge, and hate, and horror, and despair, and the implacable strife of wills that on earth consented to do evil, shall kindle and multiply the torment of lost souls; each one reflecting another's agony, and making more intense the piercing energy of pain. But this is not the part of the subject that people are wont to doubt of. It seems in harmony with the laws of eternal right, that mutual recognition in the abodes of misery, and conscious privation of bliss, and of the fellowship of blessed souls known here, but parted from them hereafter, should enter into the portion of the reprobate. The difficulties all arise on the other side; and these we will now consider. Some people out of a coldness of heart,

and many out of a hoping timidity, as fondly desiring what they hardly dare to hope, often ask, "Is it not too blessed to be true? Can it be? Shall we indeed know again all whom we have loved here?" Surely it must be so. How else shall we be then what we are now, if one-half of all our conscious being shall be annihilated? If memory, and knowledge, and love be so dim and overcast, as that we shall not remember, and know, and love with all the absolute fulness and identity of our present being, how shall we be perfect? This would be a retrogression in the order of intelligences, not an exaltation; a straitening, not an unfolding, of our spiritual life. But it is sometimes argued—"If we shall recognise all those whom we meet again, shall we not also remember those whom we miss from that blessed company? Will not the consciousness that some are wanting there embitter even the bliss of heaven? Will the fellowship of some we love fill the heart which yearns for those that appear not in glory? Will there not be even in heaven 'a voice heard' as in Ramah; 'Rachel mourning for her children,' and refusing 'to be comforted for her children,' because they are not?" These are hard reasonings, and too entangled that we should unravel them. But there are other, and those not less difficulties in the works of God; and yet the apostle thought them no hinderance to the mys-

teries of truth, nor any signs of wisdom in those that started them. Some before now have asked, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" We therefore need not go far to put these questionings to silence: but, after all, these are doubts which not only oppose themselves in the attitude of objections, but shape themselves into fears; they thrust their way unbidden into shrinking minds, that would fain believe them false. What shall we say, then? God has not drawn up the veil, and we cannot pierce its folds. We may give, indeed, some sort of answer; but we cannot allay the unrest which these misgivings breathe into our minds. Let us, however, consider that God recognises all, both them that are saved, and them that perish; He loves them beyond all love of ours, and His bliss is perfect: in heaven we are made partakers as of His will, so of His bliss; and both in us shall be perfect too. This must be answer enough for the understanding; and until we "know even as we are known," faith must make answer to our hearts.

But these were no doubtful questions in times of a livelier faith. "Shall there not be, beloved," asked St. Austin, in preaching on the resurrection, "shall there not be a recognition of us all? Do ye think that ye shall recognise me then because ye know me now, and that ye shall not know my

father whom ye have not known here, or the bishop who years ago ruled over this Church? Ye shall know all. They who shall be there, shall not therefore recognise each other because they shall behold his face; the mutual recognition of that place shall come from a higher knowledge. All shall see then, and much more excellently, as prophets here are wont to see. They shall see with a divine vision, when all shall be full of God."[1] So they believed of old, and so may we steadfastly believe now. All the saints of God shall have a transcendent and intuitive knowledge, not sought out of the memory, nor gathered from experience, nor drawn from reasonings, but by insights, and consciousness, and beatific vision. Shall we not know angels; Gabriel, who was sent of God to Nazareth; and him, too, whose name was "secret?"[2] And shall we know the angels, and not know the saints of God? Shall we know the angel Gabriel, and not know the faithful Abraham? Shall we not behold patriarchs and prophets, and apostles and martyrs, Enoch and Moses, and John Baptist and the Blessed Virgin? Shall these be to us (to speak like heathen men) as nameless spirits and unknown shades; or shall they not be revealed in all the fulness of that mysterious indi-

[1] St. August. serm. in dieb. Pasch. ccxliii. 6.

[2] Judges xiii. 18.

vidual perfection which we now by faith believe and celebrate? Yes, of a truth, they that have come from "the east and the west" to "sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven," shall not fail to know them in that day. Surely we shall say, "Lo, there is he that never saw death; and there, the 'man greatly beloved;' and there, she that sat at the feet of Jesus, and she that stood behind Him weeping; and the disciple that lay on His bosom at that last sad supper; and there is he that thrice denied his Lord, and then wept bitterly; and there is the glorious apostle through whose preaching and martyrdom we 'sinners of the Gentiles' were bidden to the marriage-supper of the Lamb; and there are they that in the first age trod the purple path to a palm and crown; and they that, age after age, followed the Lamb in sanctity and pureness: I have heard of them by hearsay, but now I see them each one face to face, as though I had lived and conversed with them in the days of the flesh." And if we shall know them whom we have not seen, how shall we not know them whom we have seen? Shall we recognise the objects of our faith, and not know the objects of our love? Shall we know those of whose presence our imaginations have wrought in vain to shape so much as an outline, and not know those with whom we have here companied through

long years of earthly being; whose form, and bearing, and speaking looks, and every visible movement, are interwoven with our very consciousness; who are so knit to us as to be all but our very selves? Such, indeed, is the hope of the Gospel, and the faith of the Catholic Church. Let no man defraud you of your joy. When any would try you with a doubt, make answer, "I believe . . . in the communion of saints . . . the resurrection of the *body*." Say what you will, we are fools, and ye are wise; but, wise or foolish, this I know, we shall meet again even as we parted: yet not altogether; there shall be no more tokens of the fall, no more lines of sorrow, no more furrows of tears, no more distress, no more changes, no more fading, no more death; but all shall be fair, and radiant, and full of life, as in Him that said, "Behold . . . that it is I myself."

Now there are one or two further remarks to be made on this doctrine, and with them I will conclude.

And, first; it throws a great light upon the true doctrine of what the Church is. We are so inclined to take a shallow and external view of it, and to limit its character and office to this world, and to the successions of time, that we miss the real nature of the visible Church. It is not a form or piece of mechanism, moulded by the human will, or put

together for the uses and expedients of men and nations; but a mystery, partaking of a sacramental character, framed and ordained by God Himself. In a word, the Church is the root of the new creation, which shall be raised in its fulness at the last day; it is in part earthly, in part heavenly; it is both fleshly and spiritual, visible and invisible, mortal and immortal; "there is one body and one spirit." And it is ever putting off its mortal shroud, casting its sere leaves upon the earth, and withdrawing its vitality into its hidden source. As the saints fall asleep one by one, the "dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns unto God that gave it." And these two miracles are ever working; the bodies of the saints are dying daily, their spirits changing to the likeness of their Lord. The earth is sowing with holy dust; and the world unseen replenishing with the souls of the righteous. The Church is, in very truth, the kingdom of the resurrection; which in its secret beginnings is being "fashioned beneath in the earth:" and though it pass through miraculous changes, yet it is one and the same Church still, even as He was the same Christ both before and after He rose from the dead; not two, but one only; first mortal, afterwards immortal. So also is the spouse of Christ one and the same, both now and hereafter; now imperfect, ever changing,

outwardly decaying, inwardly transfigured; hereafter perfect, changeless, glorious, and eternal. And even now already, in the clear foresight of the Everlasting, to whom all things are present in their fulness, it is complete in Christ. But to us who see only in part, and by broken aspects, and on the outer surface, it is imperfect, and to come; but flowing on, and continually unfolding itself from age to age. Such, then, is the Church.

And, lastly; we may learn what is the nature of the holy sacraments. Baptism is our first engrafting into the kingdom of the resurrection. We are thereby translated from the old creation to the new; from the powers of death to life. Our whole nature, in body, soul, and spirit, is made to partake of the resurrection of Christ, by the secret working of the same Spirit which raised Him from the dead. The nature which saw no corruption is the principle of an incorruptible life in us; so that it may be said of us, that we are "risen with Christ;" and that not only in figure, but in spirit; not only in pledge, but by unity with Him, who Himself is "the resurrection and the life." And so, in like manner, the holy eucharist is the food of our risen life, the hidden manna, the bread of the resurrection. In it we feed on Him who is the power of immortality; we are made partakers of the glorified manhood of the second

Adam, bone of His bone, flesh of His flesh;[1] and, being "joined to the Lord," we are "one spirit."

Therefore, brethren, as men baptised into Christ, and nourished with the living bread, you have been brought under the powers of the world unseen. The virtue of a holy resurrection is in your mortal bodies; the beginnings of the spiritual body are within you: cherish the gift you have received; beware how you wound or soil the holy thing "which by nature you could not have;" for immortality is a perilous endowment: whether in sorrow or in bliss, we must be deathless. And this our eternal destiny is now hanging in the balance. What more awful thought can the heart of man conceive than the fall of a regenerate spirit? what more fearful than the first movement towards declension? "for it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."[2] The body with which we are clothed must either be quickened in holiness with our spirit, or it will turn back again toward the second death, and through it our spirit also become

[1] Eph. v. 30. [2] Heb. vi. 4-6.

"twice dead." In the faithful it is kept under, and held in check by "the powers of the world to come;" but in the faithless it is a haunt of impurity, and a minister of sin and hell. Let us watch against the carnal mind; for though it be thrust down from its dominion, yet the infection of our nature abides still in the regenerate. The immortality which is in us may yet become "earthly, sensual, devilish." We may yet be doomed to an unhallowed resurrection, and to an endless life "where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." But, it is also a blessed thought, that there is a change awaiting us. After all our toiling and self-chastisement, there still remains with us a fast-cleaving and mysterious evil; and a deep consciousness is ever telling us that, do what we may, we must bear the grave-clothes of the fall till the morning of the resurrection; that we must suffer under the load of an imperfect nature, until God shall resolve our sullied manhood into its original dust, and gather it up once more in a restored purity. The hope of the resurrection is the stay of our souls when they are wearied and baffled in striving against the disobedience of our passive nature. At that day we shall be delivered from the self which we abhor, and be all pure as the angels of God. O healing and kindly death, which shall refine our mortal

flesh to a spiritual body, and make our lower nature chime with the Eternal will in faultless harmony! Let us, then, as they that in pledge and promise are risen with Christ, so live in sympathy with the world to come, that death, and the resurrection of the dead, may be not so much a change in our earthly life as the crown of its perfection. Let us so live that our earthly course may run on into eternity, and be itself eternal. Let us never doubt, because we see no visible tokens to bespeak the virtue which is passing on us. The Church itself is but a fellowship of men that shall die; but yet she is "all glorious within." Wait till the morning of the new creation, and then shall all be revealed; and the body, which now shrouds the spirit, shall be as bright as the noon-day light; and then shall be seen openly what now is shrined within; and "the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."[1]

[1] St. Matt. xiii. 43.

SERMON XXVI.

THE GLORY OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

St. Matthew xiii. 43.

"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

It is plain that these words are spoken of the end of the world, and of the condition of the righteous in God's eternal kingdom. The purpose for which Christ came into the world was, "to bring in everlasting righteousness." All other gifts and distributions of grace, mercy, and forgiveness, are but parts of this one great and perfect gift. It was for righteousness that the whole creation groaned and travailed together: wrong, and falsehood, and violence, and impurity, and darkness, and the torment of an evil heart, in one word, unrighteousness, was both the sin and the misery of mankind.

So also, in one word, the redemption of man through the blood-shedding of Christ is the restoration of righteousness to the world. Noah was

the "heir of the righteousness which is by faith."[1] The prophecy of the Gospel was, that "righteousness" should "look down from heaven;"[2] and again we read, "Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together:"[3] "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till He come and rain righteousness upon you."[4] And therefore, when the "Sun of righteousness"[5] arose upon the earth, "the ministration of righteousness"[6] was brought into the world, "that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord."[7] And to this end we have received the "gift of righteousness,"[8] which, though perfect in itself, is not yet made perfect in us, but is ordered by the laws and measures of growth, and slow advancement; and therefore the whole mystical body of Christ, which is so made one with Him, that He is made "righteousness" unto us, is still waiting "for the hope of righteousness by faith."[9] All the regenerate are brought, by the working of

[1] Heb. xi. 7. [2] Ps. lxxxv. 11. [3] Isaiah xlv. 8.
[4] Hosea x. 12. [5] Mal. iv. 2. [6] 2 Cor. iii. 9.
[7] Rom. v. 21. [8] Rom. v. 17. [9] Gal. v. 5.

His grace, into a relation to the perfect righteousness of His person and His kingdom; and they that are of faith shall partake in fulness what they now have only in pledge. "The path of the just," or "righteous," "is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day;" and "at His coming and His kingdom" they shall be "arrayed in fine linen, clean and white," which is "the righteousness of saints."[1] Such is the meaning of our Lord's words: "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun." From which we may learn:—

In the first place, that righteousness is a gift which lies hid in us here in this earthly life; and that, partly because it is a thing in its very nature spiritual and inward, dwelling in the soul of man; and partly because it is concealed by the imperfections of our being, by the decay of our bodily frame, and the like. In this life it is so disguised, so shrouded in our mortality, and so mixed up with the changes and conditions of this world, that the gift of righteousness is rather an object of faith than of sight. We do, indeed, at all times see the tokens of its presence; but what we behold, and all that is indicated by the tokens we see, is but a very small measure of that abounding grace of righteousness which, like leaven in the mass, is

[1] Rev. xix. 8.

hid in the world, for the restoration of mankind to eternal life. For instance, we are delivered from the power of death, and yet we must die; we are made righteous, and yet we are alloyed with imperfections. The very fact of death is full of mystery. We are delivered from death by dying; and, though redeemed, we must fall under its power. Indeed, it is upon us at all times; all pains, and sicknesses, and gnawing diseases, and deadly humours which through life gather in us,—all these *are* death. All our life long we are in death; in very truth, we are dead while we live; for all the sufferings of the flesh are the shadows and the forerunners and the workings of death in us; all the bodily ills which fasten and prey upon mankind are laws of the kingdom of death. And so it has pleased God to ordain that even the righteous shall die; that they shall be bowed and bent with ills of the flesh, scathed and withered up by the powers of the visible world, by cold and heat, and pestilence, and famine, and the like; that their earthly nature shall be as it were warred upon, and beat down and brought into bondage by the strife of matter. The earthly bodies of the holiest are oftentimes "marred more than any man" by sharp pains, and lingering anguish, and fearful forms of fleshly evil; or if not so afflicted, yet we see the faculties of nature decay, the sight wax dim, and the ear

heavy, and the whole man grow weak, and weary, and spent with bearing the burden and the load of a sinking body. And not only so, but even the powers which are most closely allied to the soul, which seem to inhere in the spiritual life, they too give way, or are hidden; as if they retired from manifestation and outward exercise, all the organs through which they were wont to act being blunted, and withdrew themselves into the depth of our secret immortality: "In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond-tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail:"[1] then it comes to pass, that the wisest of men turns again to the wandering of a child; the most piercing reason is as dull as if it were worn away; the memory is misleading, and confused; and all the intellectual powers seem to be suspended and concealed.

[1] Eccles. xii. 3-5.

But there is a greater mystery still. The decay of the flesh, and of the intellectual powers, which put themselves forth through the flesh, and hold converse with this visible world, is a wonderful token of the fall, and a mark of humiliation left still upon the redeemed; yet all these powers and energies are external to the spiritual life, and abide rather at its circumference than in its centre; and therefore, though it must ever be an awful sight to behold even the righteous wasting away by natural decline, and, year by year, becoming dead, and bereft of the powers of our bodily and intellectual nature, yet it is in harmony with the laws which order all things. It is a sight full of deep and sorrowful thoughts, to see a man once endowed with strength, and wisdom, and knowledge, and skill, and power of speech, and with unbending firmness, whose whole life seemed to be taken up into one energy of righteousness, year by year passing off, unknown to himself, into lower and feebler movements, and at last so changed and clouded as to outlive his very self. And yet there are around us things which speak, as in a parable, of such decays. All the changes of nature—the falling of sapless branches, and the gathering clouds which hide the light of heaven—are so many mute witnesses, that there is none changeless and abid-

ing but God alone; and that the powers of life are secret, often hid, without manifestation or a visible presence.

But there is a mystery of humiliation even greater than this, into which, also, the righteous are permitted to enter. It is most certain that they partake, moreover, of what may be called the spiritual decays of old age. Sometimes, indeed, the righteous depart like Moses, the servant of the Lord, who "was an hundred and twenty years old when he died," and yet "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated:" but if we look at Jacob, and Eli, and David, and Solomon, and many more, and at many of whom we read in the history of the Church, or whom we ourselves see around us, we shall discern that the decays of nature are felt also in the habits and powers of the spiritual life; and the moral failings which beset old age gather even about those in whom is the gift of righteousness. We see them, for instance, more or less under what may be called the powers of dissolution. Even the best of men, when they grow old, become credulous, and irresolute, and of a weak will, and feeble in self-control, and are quickly kindled, and haunted by false fears and fanciful suspicions, and break out into little eccentricities, and are sensitive if remarked upon, or resisted, or advised.

And these little mists rise up and draw a haze over the brightness of the spirit. Without doubt, the righteous, who have made provision by self-discipline, and subjugation of temper, in the time of strength, have a great and visible advantage over all others; yet it is not to be denied that even they, when they come into the hitherto unknown condition of decay, pass under the cloud of our human infirmities.

But I have thus far spoken only of the partial and casual obscurations which the righteous suffer at certain seasons and in certain states of life: it is also most evident, however, that all the righteous are here in this life, as it were, under a cloud. It is true of every man living in the power of his regeneration, that he is for the most part hid from sight. The weakness of his nature, even though regenerate, baffles and dims the light which is struggling outward from within. This is the very condition of his sanctification: for the thing which by nature he could not have, is working mightily, subduing all things to itself; "but we see not yet all things put under" it. As is Christ's kingdom in the world, so is the beginning of righteousness in each several man. It has a deep root, striking out on every side, putting forth new energies, changing things inwardly into its own likeness, shewing itself outwardly in signs, and tokens, and a visible

form, but is itself hidden and invisible. So far as the eye of the world reaches, the holy Catholic Church is no more than any other visible polity, and not the richest, nor strongest, nor, in an earthly sense, the most politic or prosperous. On the whole, though it is evidently something that has its own character and its own meaning, and is fulfilling some definite aim, whatsoever that aim be—and the world little knows or cares—still it has no overwhelming proofs of sanctity, no obtrusive tokens of a hidden life. Though it be both holy and visible, yet there is an inwardness and a retirement about it, even in its visibleness; and what is this but to say, that it is perfection dwelling in an imperfect form; eternity in time; heaven in earth; infinity in the finite; a shadow of its mysterious Head, in whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily?" And therefore the Church has seemed, at times, to wane and to wax dim, and, at times, to grow dark outwardly; at the best it has exhibited to the world but a chequered light; rather a promise than a full orb of brightness.

So has it ever been, and ever shall be, with the righteous. They look like other men; they have the same wants, the same toils, the same gains and losses, the same sicknesses and decays, the same besetting infirmities of a fallen nature; though there be something in them which often

makes itself felt from within, and seems to be at the point of shewing itself openly to the world: yet it still lies under a veil. The light of the righteous does indeed "shine before men," but not in all its fulness: enough to bespeak the gift that is in them, but not to unfold its breadth and glory. Men can see that they are in some way higher than themselves; that "greater is He that is in" them "than he that is in the world:" but they cannot put together the characters that are impressed upon them, and read their meaning; just as men can tell that a secret cipher is a written language, though they cannot unravel what it says. Therefore the world, in all ages, has ever either blackened and maligned the righteous, or, at least, has distorted and deformed their character and actions. Nay, even more, the righteous themselves know but in part; they are too weak of sight to behold all that God is doing within them; they know that they have received a great gift from Him; that they have powers, and capacities, and sympathies, and an energy derived from the Infinite and Eternal; that wisdom, and love, and mercy, and purity, have no measure or limit, except the nature in which they dwell; as the powers of seeing or of knowing are limited only by the organisation of the body, and the conditions by which we attain to knowledge: and yet, with this teeming consciousness,

the secret of their regeneration is not half known, even by themselves; they cannot comprehend it, because they are comprehended by it, as a thing that is greater than they; and in it they have their being; and nevertheless, as, on the one side, they are baffled by the greatness of the gift, so, on the other, are they straitened by the littleness of their own finite capacities. They feel themselves beset by earthly tempers, and narrow thoughts, and shadows which fall inwardly upon their hearts, and to their own eyes they seem to be of a dim and earthly nature; they know of themselves far more evil than good; the visible and prominent points of their own character are the darker lines, and the gloomier spots, which lie upon the surface; to their own eyes they have no brightness, or, at the best, a pale, sickly light, often overcast; and they ask, "Can this be the gift of righteousness? Can this swerving will, and faint striving, and ready yielding, and often slumbering, and all this throng of hasty tempers, and high thoughts, and unchastened imaginations, can all this dwell in the soul of the righteous? Am I not passing a cheat upon myself, counting myself to be what I am not?" And how must all this perplexity be multiplied when a righteous man falls, be it never so little, from his obedience; when to the abiding sense of inward evil is added the consciousness of fresh transgressions?

What a mystery is the life of David, the man after God's own heart! how clouded and obscured, and that not by false tongues, but by his own evil deeds!

Now, from all this we may see what is the hiddenness of our spiritual life—how little it is perceived and understood by others—how imperfectly it is apprehended even by ourselves—how it may be for a time, as it were, altogether hidden from our own eyes; and yet we feel within us something which prophesies of our lot in God's kingdom, and foretells the perfection of our being hereafter; we feel something which pledges to us that we shall not fall back again to the dominion of unrighteousness; something which assures us that we shall not be for ever bounded by the limits of imperfection: we feel yearnings, and aspirations, and breathing hopes, and conscious energies, which reach after a larger sphere of being.

And so it shall be; for "the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

We learn, then, in the next place, that this gift of righteousness, which now lies hid in us, shall hereafter be unfolded in its perfection in the kingdom of God: that is to say, when all things are fulfilled, and the end is come, and the righteous shall have passed through all the changes which lie between the decay of our mortal bodies and our perfect renewal in the image of God; that

is, at the resurrection, when the whole man, in body, soul, and spirit, shall be raised from the dead, "then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun." By "the kingdom of their Father," therefore, is meant the kingdom of the resurrection. Then shall all that here lay hid in them be unfolded; all shall be perfect, and enlarged to an ineffable perfection. The very body shall become a vessel of glory, being made like to the glorious body of the second Adam; of whom, even in the days of His flesh, we read, in that one season of transient brightness, that "His raiment was white and glistering," "white as the light," "exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can white them;" "and His face did shine as the sun:" so with our flesh; "it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory." The body in which we have groaned "being burdened," in which we have often fainted and fallen back from "the law of the Spirit of life," in which we have been bowed down to earth with blindness, and deafness, and deadness of powers and sense,—even that same earthly frame shall be full of life, and penetrated with the light of heaven. There shall be in it no more any law warring against the law of the Spirit; no division of the man against himself; no strife in the being of the righteous: but the glorious body shall be the glad minister

of a holy will, and quickened by the pervading unity of the glorified spirit. And we know that "they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead," cannot "die any more; for they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."[1] Nay, more; we shall bear the likeness of the Son of God, of whom we read, when He appeared to St. John, that "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."[2]

And yet the glory of the body would seem to be chiefly but the manifestation of the glory of the spirit. Then shall our regeneration be fulfilled: "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." What this mysterious likeness may mean, it is not for us too curiously to inquire. Certainly, we know that every saint while on earth has had impressed upon him by the hand of God his own definite character; and yet all have been likened to their Lord. All their several features of distinctness were comprehended in the perfect mind of Christ. They were all conformed to Him; they were all knit in unity together, by their universal likeness to one common pattern; and so shall they doubtless be hereafter, when the faint beginnings of perfection shall be unfolded in the fulness of God's kingdom. All the bonds and fetters of imper-

[1] St. Luke xxi. 35, 36. [2] Rev. i. 16.

fection, all the heavy burden of earth and sinfulness, and all that checked or thwarted the energies of their regenerate spirit,—shall be abolished; and all that was in them of heaven and of God—all holy affections, and pure thoughts, and righteous intentions,—shall break forth into the perfection of glory. All that Noah, Daniel, and Job, or David, and Paul, and John, sought and strove to be, by self-chastisement, and prayer, and righteousness of life, such they shall be at "the manifestation of the sons of God." We see now in those around us, that each one has some characteristic feature: in the mind of one we see a deep wisdom; of another, a saintly meekness; of another, an angelic contemplation; of another, a burning charity; —each one being a law, a pattern to himself. We see, too, that this characteristic feature is ever coming out into a fuller shape, drawing towards its own perfect idea. So may we believe that, in the kingdom of the resurrection, all the gifts of God, all graces of the heart, and all endowments of the sanctified reason, shall then be made perfect: without doubt all that constitutes the mysterious individuality of each several man; all the inscrutable features by which his spiritual being is distinguished, without being opposed to, or divided from, the spirits of other men, shall be perpetuated hereafter; and then shall all differences be har-

monised in the perfection of bliss, as all hues are blended in the unity of light. Sacraments, and prophecies, and signs, and all economies of grace, and shadows of truth, shall all have passed away; and this busy world, and all the works of it, shall be burned up; and all worldly sciences shall be abolished, and all false theories of truth, and all falsehood which is interwoven with the truth, and all vain and unprofitable learning, shall be no more; and yet must we not believe, that as all that we have here received of grace, so also all that we have received of truth, shall be perfected and made eternal? All the mysteries of the Divine Mind of which we have here partaken shall still abide in the illuminated spirit. In the many orders and ranks of the blessed there shall be an ascent and scale of being. All the powers and endowments of the individual mind, and of all its contemplative energies, and all the characters and forms which truth has impressed upon the sons of wisdom in this life, shall doubtless then be carried onward to the fulness of knowledge; all shall be full of light, and yet all shall not be of an equal measure; all shall be admitted to the beatific vision, but some shall behold with a more piercing gaze; as is it here, so shall it be there. Manifold and inexhaustible variety is one of the tokens of the Divine Mind upon His visible works. It may be, that were all

alike, it would be as the dull sound of one changeless tone, without fall or harmony. As height, and breadth, and depth, and order, and degrees, and multitude, and unity, are laws of God's kingdom, so also is harmony, which is the unity of things various and manifold; and so, when "the righteous shine forth as the sun," all the individual perfection which has lain hid in the saints shall issue forth and blend into the eternal light. On the twelve gates of the heavenly Jerusalem are "the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel;"[1] on the twelve foundations "the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb;" the hundred and forty and four thousand were sealed each one in the name of his tribe; to him that overcometh shall be given "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Each one several and distinct, even as here, so shall he be there; each one shining forth in his own blessedness; and yet the song of the redeemed, the everlasting chant of "all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues," is but one; their voices without number, yet but one accordant hymn; so shall all perfection, and all righteousness, and all bliss, and all thanksgiving, be perfect in every saint, and united in one heavenly glory, which shall encompass the righteous.

[1] Rev. xxi. 14, 16; ii. 17.

O wonderful and blessed thought, that the gift which is in us shall one day have the mastery over all obstructions; that all sins, and faults, and weaknesses, and ignorance, and all decay and wandering, and all the clouds which rest upon mortality, and all the hinderances of the world and of the flesh, shall be taken away; and that we shall be ripened into a mysterious perfection of the spiritual being! Blessed thought, and full of freshness and calm to the weary and heavy-laden, one day all their oppressions shall be rolled back from them, and they shall "shine forth as the sun!" Let us beware how we judge one another. Who knows what may lie hid in the man whom we slight and cast out as of no esteem? who can say how he may outshine his fellows in the kingdom of the resurrection? "We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour: how is he numbered with the children of God, and his lot is among the saints! Therefore have we erred from the way of truth, and the light of righteousness hath not shined unto us, and the sun of righteousness rose not upon us."[1] Wonderful and overwhelming, to behold at that day the resurrection of the righteous, each one shining forth in his own distinguishable splendour! "Then shall we know even as also we are known;" and there shall be

[1] Wisdom v. 4-6.

strange overrulings of our blind judgments. "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." The poor man thou despisedst an hour ago shall sit higher than thou at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. And the simple and unlearned, and the lowly and slow of speech, whom the learned, and eloquent, and lofty, and prosperous, have contemned as mean and foolish, shall be arrayed in an exceeding brightness, before which they shall be dim and naked. Let us also beware how we give much care or thought to any thing but to the perfecting of our hidden life. What else is worth living for? What else shall endure at Christ's coming? Most awful and searching day, when "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sèvenfold, as the light of seven days!" Let us therefore live ever waiting for that hour. What matter though we be poor, slighted, slandered, forgotten, moving in the shadows of the world, so that we attain unto a glorious resurrection? O most glad hour, when it shall dawn towards the first day of the everlasting week; when there shall be a making ready in the heaven above and in the earth beneath; when legions of angels shall gather around the Sun of righteousness, and all orders and hosts of heaven shall know that the time for "the manifestation of the sons of God" is come! What joy shall there be

at that hour in the world unseen! and what a thrill, as of a penetrating light, shall run through the dust where the saints are sleeping! When was there ever such a day-spring since the time when "God said, Let there be light, and there was light?" He shall come, and all His shining ones; ten thousand times ten thousand, whose countenances are "like lightning," and their "raiment white as snow;" all the heavenly court,—angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim,—clad in unimaginable splendours; and the righteous shall arise from the grave, and the earth shall be lightened with their glory; they shall stretch forth their hands to meet Him, and bow themselves before the brightness of His coming. O blessed hour, after all the sorrows, and wrongs, and falsehoods, and darkness, and burdens of life, to see Him face to face; to be made sinless; to shine with an exceeding strength; to be as the light, in which there "is no darkness at all!" Be this our hope, our chiefest toil, our almost only prayer.

THE END.

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